

UIAA President resigns at General Assembly in Singapore

Just one year after being unanimously elected President of the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA), Alan Blackshaw resigned at its General Assembly (GA) held in Singapore on 15 October 2005. This followed a vote not to accept his President's Report for 2005. The Report had described Blackshaw's proposals for a strong and united UIAA (with links to the Olympic Movement and the UN Global Mountain Partnership); addressed organisational and constitutional problems presently faced by the UIAA; and outlined his proposals to overcome these difficulties, initially through the appointment of a small internal working group of Council Members to report back in May 2006.

Blackshaw has been a driving force within the UIAA on a number of initiatives since he first became a member (and subsequently President) of the UIAA's Mountaineering Commission in 1985, including the introduction of competition climbing into the UIAA, when others were opposed. Since 1995 he has been UIAA Special Representative to the UN Global Mountain Partnership and its predecessor bodies. Speaking from his home in Scotland Blackshaw said:

“My President's Report 2005 set out a plan for the continuing development of the UIAA as a worldwide body with strong links both to the Olympic Movement and the UN Global Mountain Partnership. As a matter of good communication and transparency, it also described the problems which had emerged during the year and workable solutions. I regret that the debate focused on the existence of this part of the Report and not on the proposals I made for taking the UIAA forward as a strong and unified body able to assist all forms of mountaineering, including the competition sports.”

According to the unadopted President's Report 2005 (which is available from www.alanblackshaw.com), one of the problems was the apparent influence of Marco Sclaris (the President for competition climbing in the UIAA) in the identification and promotion of a group of 4 candidates (including himself) for election onto the UIAA Board in October 2004. In June this year Blackshaw was asked to look into this apparent influence by Mike Mortimer the North American representative on the UIAA Council. Blackshaw produced a Consultation Draft Paper on this issue on 15 August and a final version shortly before the General Assembly (available on request from alanblackshaw@hotmail.com).

It is common knowledge that Blackshaw has been opposed in the UIAA Board by a majority group including Sclaris. For example, it has dismissed a key member of staff supporting the President, committed the UIAA to move the UIAA office to Turin, and proposed a new split structure for the UIAA which appears to be out of line with previous GA decisions for a more integrated structure. In addition, Josef Klenner, the President of the German Alpine Club (DAV) and Pierre Humblet (UIAA Vice President and now Acting President) have claimed that Blackshaw should have supported these decisions, on the grounds that the President is only *primus inter pares* in the Board.

In 2003 Klenner was the candidate for the post of UIAA President, but he unexpectedly withdrew in May 2004 creating a hiatus that was resolved by Blackshaw's willingness to stand for election as UIAA President instead. Subsequently Klenner was elected as President of the Club Arc Alpin, which is a body for the national clubs in the Alps including Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. At the UIAA GA in Singapore the representatives of some of these national clubs led by Josef Klenner, and the representatives for competition climbing, presented united opposition to Blackshaw.

Marco Sclaris and other members of the Board for Competition Climbing had also sent a report to member Federations in mid-August 2005 stating that there was hate by an un-named small group in the UIAA towards competition climbing. Blackshaw has pointed out that, to the contrary, both he and his predecessor have been strong supporters of competition climbing over the years, and requested that the allegation should have been justified or withdrawn.

When Blackshaw announced that he would resign as President he stressed to the GA that, in producing his President's Report 2005, he had made clear that he was just the messenger, and that there were problems requiring attention in the UIAA, in the interests of the wider mountaineering and climbing community, including the competition sports. He mentioned in particular the apparent UIAA Climbing influence on the 2004 elections in New Delhi; the report from the Board of UIAA Climbing which had alleged hate against competition climbing; and the covert proposal by the DAV to seek the dismissal of the UIAA President discussed privately in early September (long before the production of the President's Report 2005) with other UIAA members.

Blackshaw had made clear to the UIAA Council back in May 2005 that if the key member of staff were dismissed without any equivalent replacement, he would be left with the support only of a part-time Secretary, which would be insufficient for him to continue to carry out his responsibilities. When the staff member was removed by the Board at the end of August 2005, Alan Blackshaw decided that it would have been too disruptive for himself to resign as President at that time, only some 6 weeks before the General Assembly. Accordingly, he made temporary arrangements for staff support during September and October personally, but this could not have continued for more than a short time after the General Assembly, so he would soon have had to resign as President anyway, due to lack of staff support.

He was also concerned as to how to reconcile his personal commitment to helping Competition Climbing and the other UIAA competition sports to be considered for inclusion in the programme of the Olympic Games, with the evident hostility of prominent UIAA Federations to him even approaching the Olympic Movement informally for clarification of its guidance role on ethical issues.

*For details of Alan Blackshaw's contribution to the UIAA see www.alanblackshaw.com
Tel: +44 (0) 1540 673075 Fax: +44 (0) 1540 673934 E-mail: alanblackshaw@hotmail.com*