



Santonian Working Group

Subcommission on Cretaceous Stratigraphy, International Commission on Stratigraphy-
International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)

Chairman: Marcos A. Lamolda

An answer to the Dr. Walaszczyk's open letter to the members of the SWG

The open letter sent by Dr. I. Walaszczyk to members of the Santonian Working Group (SWG), seems to refer to documents which are not what I mailed, e.g., the report about the base Santonian GSSP candidates, and my complaint letter to the International Commission on Stratigraphy, about bad practices of some voting members of the Subcommission on Cretaceous Stratigraphy (SCS).

You know both documents and a summary of the correspondence with evidences of the bad practices mentioned above. Nonetheless, in the 'open letter' there are several statements which are wrong, and is imputed to me an unfair redaction of the report.

I have been open with everyone and keep informed the working group about my activities, and sent regular report to the SCS. I have tried to follow ICS procedures and took as model other previous reports. It is difficult for a chairman of a working group to produce a complete and unbiased report when some of the members do not keep him informed of what they are doing.

All relevant papers were published last year, all but Gale et al. paper had been delayed for several years, and are already somewhat dated. In particular, Jarvis et al. (2006) paper on isotope events was unavailable and is invaluable for correlation between Ten Mile Creek, S England and Olazagutia. When it was clear, I included results about correlation, although unpublished so 'confidential', as it was essential the SWG members had the latest information before making a decision. This information was also relevant to correct a published error such as the claim that Olazagutia section is incomplete (Howe et al., 2007). Or perhaps, should this chairman not make available this information to members simply because it is unpublished?

Even if the report is considered biased by some people, all the working group saw it and were able to judge for themselves. I think all SWG members are qualified to give a fair opinion about candidates. By contrast, I disagreed that some members selfnominated as "actively involved in work on the base of the Santonian" have a better qualified opinion or a preference from this chairman.

Until the publication of the Gale et al. paper, my view (and attendants to Bilbao work shop one, too) relied on Jake Hancock's comments (and Gale & Hancock's abstract contribution) at the Bilbao meeting, and the Howe et al. paper. Now, we have similar data to compare Olazagutia with Ten Mile Creek (TMC), and S England sections. A main problem with TMC (Walmart section) is that it only extends 5 m at most into the Santonian, what is quite unacceptable, in addition to outcrop characteristics (as it was argued in the report about candidates). It is true that combined with other sections the results are better, but then arises the requirement of preservation of the whole composite section.

Although creek sections are apparently under state control, thus providing open access now, will it continue? The USA has a long history of canalizing, etc., rivers in the name of flood control. Does state control make that procedure easier, or more difficult? Jake Hancock's additional objections to TMC section preservation were related to the growing urban area where the Dallas section is located.

Most of the merits of TMC section mentioned in the 'open letter' rely to a great extent of macrofossil data, but in the report about candidates it is shown that really accurate correlation has to be based on isotope data. Thus although there are potentially more macrofossil events at TMC, many cannot be correlated with other candidate sections (e.g., ammonites) or can be shown not to be good time planes, as the primary biomarker is. I remark that *Texanites* was rejected during the Brussels meeting, as its first occurrence is well below the FO of *Platyceramus undulatoaplicatus*.

Foraminifers and nannofossils should not be neglected. In the report were mentioned most relevant key bioevents related to both groups, which is more extended in cited publications. Many of these bioevents work at low and middle (palaeo)latitudes, and even benthic forams, present at Olazagutia, allow a correlation with cold water areas. By contrast, macrofauna, e.g., *P. undulatoaplicatus*, has not been found at low latitudes, N Africa, or in the Pacific Realm. The advantage of forams and nanno is crushing in deep sea and other research topics. Potential use of both of them to characterise the Coniacian/Santonian boundary is several times in terms of earth surface by comparison with known macrofauna occurrences. I am sure either forams as nanno, contrasted by stable isotopes and/or cyclostratigraphy, will allow us to find an accurate solution to the problem of the Coniacian/Santonian boundary in those areas where *P. undulatoaplicatus*, has not been found.

Just concluding, I as chairman of the working group have followed the procedures faithfully and only made known the difficulties I encountered once the final vote was taken, thus ensuring they did not bias the vote at all. By contrast, some members of the SWG made an attempt to influence the outcome behind the scenario, trying to undermine the legitimate process, instead to present an open discussion of the difficulties they perceived.

Granada, Monday February 4th 2008
Marcos A. Lamolda
Chairman, Santonian Working Group

P.S. A full set of the correspondence mentioned in my complain letter to the ICS will be soon available at the website <http://www.ugr.es/~mlamolda/swg/> with other documents about the base Santonian GSSP proposal.