

## UNI welcomes offshoring agreement

UNI has welcomed an agreement between UK affiliate Amicus and CSC – one of the world's leading IT services companies – on offshore outsourcing.

The agreement – on world sourcing – was announced at the UNI Communicators Forum in Washington DC, USA by Peter Skyte of Amicus, who is also chair of UNI's IT Committee. The agreement provides for early consultations and full information on the business case for proposed outsource projects as well as job security for existing staff and investment in their skills training.

CSC has also agreed to behave ethically in insourcing countries – observing guidelines laid down by the International Labour Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

"Our task is to make globalisation work for society," Peter told the 50 union journalists and webworkers.

"This is a major breakthrough involving one of the top IT service companies in the world," said UNI's Gerhard Rohde, who chaired a key Forum session on outsourcing.

Gerhard warned of the high failure rate of outsourcing projects and reported on the UNI MOOS project, which aims to establish sustainable forms of outsourcing.

"I am convinced that offshoring is a process we cannot stop but we can contribute to better manage the process and alleviate the impact on our members."

He reported on the work in India of UNI and affiliates to support the IT Professional Forum movement that is organising IT workers in a number of Indian cities and which has now established national coordination.

Ralph Maly of the Communication Workers of America warned that going offshore "pulls down the already low wages of domestic contractors (and) has a deflationary impact on the larger economy".

"Collective bargaining is the best way to confront outsourcing and the movement of work. Our strategy is to limit the scope and influence of outsourcing," said Ralph.

He emphasised the issue of quality for services and for employment and said the union's goal is "to encourage companies to pursue a high road" approach and called for enhanced bargaining rights to make low road strategies more difficult.

He reported on successful moves to bring back outsourced work and the "consumer's right to know" legislative campaign to oblige call centre workers to identify their location when answering customer calls.

On an audio link from London Adrian Askew, of Connect UK, reported on their agreement with BT to handle offshored work.

It too builds in prior consultation and the opportunity for the union to challenge the business case, along with no compulsory redundancies and investment in training in the event of offshoring.

Connect members affected are guaranteed work of similar or higher value.

BT has signed up to labour rights for the new insourced workers in India and the union monitors the situation through its own members attached to the projects there.

"Our union experience in the UK is that policies of protectionism have never proved to be

successful in the past. We have to protect the interests of our members."



Peter Skyte (standing) with UNI's Gerhard Rohde  
and the CWA's Ralph Maly



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