



**Change the  
future for  
young workers**

**Join your  
union!**

**UNISON**  
*Eastern*

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## Dear Friends,

Often trapped by the challenges of low pay, in precarious, insecure jobs, struggling with rising housing costs, or just finding it difficult to get onto the next rung of the career ladder, young workers need trade unions.

And trade unions need young workers – they are the **here and now** of our movement.

UNISON places young workers front and centre of our organising agenda, working alongside young workers representatives we shape our campaigns to help secure a better future for all workers – that’s why fought to make 2019 the Year of the Young Worker across the entire trade union movement.

This booklet has been compiled to celebrate the amazing contribution young activists make to the trade union and labour movement.

We hope that you find inspiration from the activists and campaigners we’ve brought together!



**Becky Tye**  
Regional Convenor

**Chris Jenkinson**  
Regional Secretary



# THE BURSTON STRIKE SCHOOL

1914 – 1939

The longest strike in history was not staged by miners but by minors – the children of a small village in Norfolk. On 1 April 1914, pupils of the Burston village school, supported by their parents, took to the streets in protest at the dismissal of their teachers, Tom and Annie Higdon.

**A**NNIE KATHERINE SCHOL-LICK, known as Kitty, was born in 1865 in Cheshire. Tom Higdon was born in 1869, the son of a Somerset farm labourer. The pair were married in 1896, moving to Norfolk in 1902.

The Higdons began teaching at Wood Dalling County School, near Aylsham in Norfolk, on 14 April 1902. Kitty was appointed as the head teacher and Tom her assistant. The school was in poor condition, with the landowners insisting on taking children out of class to work the fields. The Higdons tried to change this culture to give the children a better start in life. The Norfolk Education Committee didn't agree - instead they moved the teachers to another Norfolk school, in the village of Burston.



Much like Wood Dalling, Burston village school was cold, dark and unsuitable for children. Burston School was also run by a management committee made up of landowners and the Reverend Charles Eland who was keen to keep the school as it was, teaching the children to know their place, and wanted to be seen as the leader of the village.

When they arrived, the Higdons attempted to succeed where they had failed in Wood Dalling. They soon faced problems with the landowners who wanted the children as fodder for the factories and farms. After complaining about the conditions they ran into trouble for lighting fires in the school to dry out the damp and wash the clothes of children suffering from lice or dirty from walking miles to get to class.



*Tom Higdon was a farm labourer before becoming a teacher*

Kitty and Tom treated the children in accordance with their individual needs, teaching them fair play and justice. Attendance rose dramatically and despite the school system of the time, the children were able to learn and gain experiences that gave them opportunities in life they wouldn't otherwise have achieved. Children were taught to write, read the stars at night, learn about photography as well as reading and arithmetic. The way the Higdons taught their children was fun and enjoyable. For the first time, the children were happy at school.

Tom Higdon soon realised that changes in the classroom alone would not be enough so stood for election to the parish council, both to improve condi-

## 6 | Change the future

tions at the school and for the agricultural labourers generally. Tom and other labourers were elected in such numbers that they wrested control from Rev Eland and other key landowners, giving the village and the school children hope of a brighter future.

But the landowners still controlled the school management committee. As an act of revenge they targeted Kitty Higdon for lighting the fires without permission and accused her of beating two children as a punishment for telling lies, even gaining a witness statement from the children's foster parents. The management committee demanded the immediate sacking of Tom and Kitty Higdon.

An inquiry found no evidence of the accusations, but because Kitty was deemed to have been discourteous to the management committee the pair were still removed. Despite the National Union of Teachers' involvement, they were given three months' notice and began plans to depart for a second time.

### “We are going on strike tomorrow”

On 1 April 1914, the day after the Higdons left, the school's management committee welcomed their replacement to the school.

As they entered an empty school, they found nothing but a message left for them on the classroom blackboard: “We are going on strike tomorrow.”

As the committee left the building they were met with a march coming down the road towards them, led by 13-year-old pupil Violet Potter. Violet, the children and their parents all wanted justice and the immediate reinstatement of their teachers.

A makeshift schoolroom was set up on the Green under a marquee where 66 of the 72 pupils continued to study under the Higdons. Kitty insisted that despite the circumstances, their standards be maintained and continued to teach in the same way that they had at the school before they were removed. As winter got closer a disused workshop in the carpenters shop at the green was used to shelter the children from the harsh conditions.

The landowners fought back – 18 parents were summoned to court and fined for not sending their children to the local authority school. The villagers stuck together and paid the fines for the parents and although parents continued to be fined, they all stuck together and it became clear that they had put the education and futures of their children above anything the authorities could do.

When the landowners sacked the parents that worked the fields and attempted to evict them, the villagers pulled together. With the struggles of the First World War taking their toll,





it soon became apparent that the landowners needed the workers more than the workers needed them and so the landowners' tactics didn't last for long.

When the strike reached its anniversary, the lease on the workshop was due to expire. To keep the strike going, trade unions and the Labour Party drew donations from across the country and raised over £1,250 to keep the school going.

Kitty Higdon suggested the donations be used for a new purpose-built school with proper facilities and the new school was opened by the leader of the strike, Violet Potter.

She declared: "With joy and thankfulness I declare this school open – to be forever a School of Freedom."

## After the Strike

In 1920 When Reverend Eland left Burston, He was replaced by Francis Smith who continued to run the local authority school. The two schools often competed with each other at sports and Francis Smith often aided the Strike School with additional religious education. Ten years later both schools shared equal attendances and the school also accepted children from outside of the community, often boarding in Burston free of charge.

When Tom Higdon died in 1939, a 75-year-old Kitty decided she was unable to carry on alone. The Strike School closed soon after and all the children were moved over to the local authority school. This time the facilities were of high quality and standards, an example set by the Higdons.

Burston School Strike had lasted for over 25 years and is still the longest-lasting strike in history.

Kitty Higdon died on 24 April, 1946. She was buried next to her husband, in Burston's churchyard.

# The Strike Rally today

AFTER Annie died, the Strike School was left without a legal owner. In 1949 the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) made the Burston Strike School a registered educational charity.

Four trustees were appointed – three from the NUAW along with local resident (and NUAW member) Sol Sandy, who was the last remaining trustee from when the school was a functioning educational establishment.

The trustee committee was drawn from members of the NUAW, until it became the Agricultural and Allied Workers Trade Group of the Transport and General Workers Union in 1982. This has since merged into Unite, which continues to organise the Burston rally today, although not all trustees are now Unite members.

In 1983 the Burston Strike School Rally once more became an annual event, with the day now being fixed to the first Sunday in September. The event is funded by trade unions keeping it free of charge for attendees.

Every year, thousands of people commemorate the longest strike in history and celebrate the people who continue to fight for Trade Union rights, working class education, democracy in the countryside and international solidarity.





The rally has gone from strength to strength in recent years





## 2019: YEAR OF THE YOUNG WORKER

Young workers are entitled, apathetic, hooked on social media and full of pumpkin-spiced chai lattes and Love Island, right? Wrong.

The stereotypes hide a dark and harsh reality. Most young workers suffer low wages, insecure jobs and no voice at work. They need trade unions now more than ever.

UNISON has prioritised supporting Britain's young workforce and we encourage anyone to get involved in supporting our objective, some of which, we highlight here.

## A busy year for young workers

2019 is the Year of the Young Worker. It not only raises awareness of the hard graft carried out by our young members in their workplaces and the barriers they face, but also to celebrate the successes of young workers in UNISON.

We started our year celebrating the successful launch of our Uncomfortable Yet? campaign. It was created to raise awareness of what sexual harassment is, be it an inappropriate joke or an unwanted advance.

We wanted to both educate young workers on identifying sexual harassment and make sure they knew that there is support available — particularly from their trade union.

The campaign has been a great success in our region and has even spread to the rest of the country, with requests for our posters, postcards and information coming in from branches and individuals around the UK.

We helped out at Bedford River Festival which was a great event and we're definitely looking forward to returning next year.

We also attended the National Young Members Weekend which we are glad to report will soon be the National Young Members Conference, giving young workers even more of a voice in our union!

Then we jump to the National Delegate Conference, UNISON's parliament, where Shipha represented us, moving her first motion which was an incredible experience, not only the NDC but also having a voice as young workers.

Throughout the year we have been working towards Unity Festival, a place where politics and live entertainment meets, and the location couldn't be more fitting, Burston, coinciding with the Burston Strike Rally.

We are launching a new campaign at Unity Festival around affordable housing, as well as continuing our Uncomfortable Yet? campaign.



**Jordan Watson**

Eastern region Young Workers chair

**Shipha Begum**

Eastern region Young Workers vice-chair

Key workplace challenges for Britain's young core workers

- Low pay,
- Low-skilled, low-quality jobs,
- Lack of training opportunities,
- Over-qualification for the jobs available,
- Weak opportunities for progression and promotion,
- Under-employment,
- Precarious working conditions,
- Bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment,
- Pressure on working parents,
- No voice in the workplace.

## Young workers and the housing crisis

**U**NISON's National Delegate Conference in June engaged in passionate debates on how to best tackle the housing crisis. There are 170,000 homeless families in London alone, affecting the quality of life and development of many children – it's not a crisis, it's an emergency.

The problem for thousands of people though, isn't that there aren't enough physical buildings, it's money. The truth is a lot of housing costs too much.

When young McDonalds workers reached breaking point and went on strike, they told stories of having to eat free food at work or sleep on a friend's sofa just to get by. For many young workers, those stories sound very familiar.

Many workers in public services cannot afford to live in the area they serve where private rents come with a £2,000 deposit that they just can't afford and have to use foodbanks to get by. Many of UNISON's young workers only have the option of shared housing, not always in the safest of areas and in some cases, landlords move in new tenants overnight.

At conference, our members



demanding that we continue to make the case for decent, secure, safe and affordable housing, work with Defend Council Housing, Homes For All and Axe The Housing Act to campaign for increased building of council homes, highlight the cost of housing in pay campaigns to ensure that our members have additional income to pay for their housing costs, and campaign for £10 an hour minimum wage and lobby the Westminster government and devolved administrations on the issues.

To be truly successful in achieving this, campaigning is essential.

We believe the government has a duty to ensure people living in the UK have decent, secure, stable, safe and affordable homes to live in. That's why we campaign for economic policies that will help our members on modest incomes. We are also concerned about the particular challenges faced by young workers who have to put up with high rents, poor quality accommodation and insecurity in private renting.

This year UNISON's National Delegate Conference called on UNISON to

- Continue to make the case for decent, secure, safe and affordable housing;
- Work with Defend Council Housing, Homes For All and Axe The Housing Act to campaign for increased building of council homes;
- Highlight the cost of housing in pay campaigns to ensure that our members have additional income to pay for their housing costs, and campaign for £10 an hour minimum wage;
- Lobby the Westminster government and devolved administrations on these housing issues.

But we also need politicians to acknowledge the specific impact that unaffordable housing has on young workers and their future. More and more young workers have accepted that buying a house will be out of their reach. Now even renting is becoming unaffordable for many young workers.





## Young workers and low pay

IN APRIL 2019 UNISON launched the #OneWageAnyAge campaign as we celebrated 20 years of the national minimum wage.

At the Palace of Westminster on 1 April, UNISON, MPs and peers launched the union's #OneWageAnyAge campaign to abolish the discriminatory age bands.

Helping cut a birthday cake to mark the anniversary, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn commented: "I want to say 'thank you' to UNISON and to NUPE and to NALGO (which merged to form UNISON) – that's where the fight for the minimum wage began."

A Labour government will legislate for a minimum wage of £10 an hour and make sure that every union has the right to go into every workplace and negotiate better.

For young people in particular, the national minimum wage has been a missed opportunity. Baked into the original minimum wage were different wage rates for different age groups — something which George Osborne hardened when in 2015 he decided that under-25s wouldn't receive his new 'national living wage' (which of course, is too little to actually live on). Paying different workers different wages for the same job because of their age is discriminatory, and that's why UNISON has been proud to lead the fight for equalisation of the minimum/living wage – and why our young members will lead the fight for #OneWageAnyAge.

The scale of the difference between the full adult rate and the youth rates means that a 20-year-old minimum wage worker in a full-time job earns almost £4,000 a year less than the (already very low) wage of a 25-year-old minimum wage worker doing the same job.

If you want to improve this, one thing you must do is join a trade union. UNISON gives people doing your job protection and a voice at work.

# Harassment really isn't part of any young worker's job description

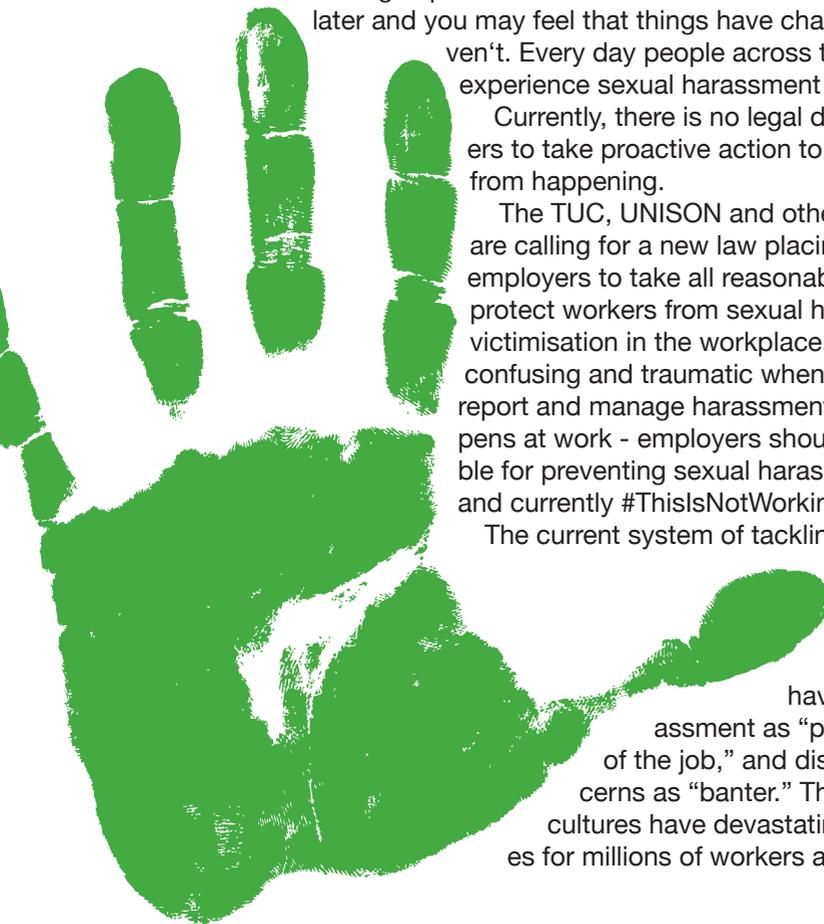
**S**EXUAL HARASSMENT has no place in the workplace. Every day, people across the UK are sexually harassed at work. One in two women have been sexually harassed at work and 68% of LGBT+ workers have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

Back in 2017, the scandal surrounding Harvey Weinstein and the #MeToo movement exposed the hidden experiences people have suffered and the shocking impact of sexual harassment in society. Two years later and you may feel that things have changed – they haven't. Every day people across the UK still experience sexual harassment and assault.

Currently, there is no legal duty on employers to take proactive action to prevent this from happening.

The TUC, UNISON and other trade unions are calling for a new law placing a duty on employers to take all reasonable steps to protect workers from sexual harassment and victimisation in the workplace. It is isolating, confusing and traumatic when victims have to report and manage harassment when it happens at work - employers should be responsible for preventing sexual harassment at work and currently #ThisIsNotWorking.

The current system of tackling sexual harassment at work isn't adequate. For too long employers have treated harassment as "part and parcel of the job," and dismissed concerns as "banter." These workplace cultures have devastating consequences for millions of workers and enough is



enough. Currently those who have experienced harassment to come forward and report what's happened to their employer before any action is taken but 80% of these workers don't feel able to report it.

There can be other barriers to reporting. Two-thirds of LGBT people didn't feel able to report being harassed, with one in four saying they didn't raise the issue with their employer for fear of being "outed" at work.

Sexual harassment at work is a systemic problem, and it needs a systemic response. Employers already owe their workers a duty of care, but there is currently no statutory duty on employers to prevent harassment before it happens. We want it to be law that if employers fail to take these steps, this should constitute a breach of the Equality Act 2006, which would mean the EHRC could take enforcement action. This would counter the all too defensive responses to complaints that allowed this issue to become a major problem in the work place.

Days after the TUC launched its campaign, the government announced a consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace to look at whether the current laws do enough to protect workers. Campaigns work, but we have a duty to ourselves to keep up the pressure on the government to act. If you agree visit the TUC website and sign petition now, like 10,000 have already done.

## UNISON urges law reform as one in 12 NHS staff sexually harassed

In June, a UNISON survey of more than 8,500 healthcare workers revealed that more than one in 12 had suffered sexual harassment in the last two years. Hundreds of healthcare workers have been subjected to sexual harassment – including groping, upskirting and rape – by bosses, patients and colleagues.

UNISON is campaigning to reinstate section 40 of the Equality Act 2010, a law which makes employers liable for failing to act if their staff are harassed by a third party.



## Tackling sexual harassment

THE TUC say #ThisIsNotWorking and UNISON agrees. Back in January, our young public-sector workers launched a campaign against sexual harassment.

UNISON Eastern region's young workers committee has distributed thousands of postcards to UNISON members across the region, raising awareness of sexual harassment and advising people how to deal with it. The Uncomfortable Yet? campaign includes a video and posters to display in hospitals, schools, council offices and other public-sector workplaces to make sure people know what to do if they feel uncomfortable.

The UNISON Eastern young workers committee said: "We are much more aware of sexual harassment now than we were a couple of years ago thanks to high-profile revelations in Hollywood and the work of the Me Too movement. There's still a lot to do to make sure people at work are aware of what sexual harassment actually is and – importantly – what they can do about it."

"And we want people to understand that it can affect anybody, regardless of age, sex, sexuality or gender.

"From suggestive comments to inappropriate jokes to requests for sexual favours, if it makes you uncomfortable it has no place in the workplace."

To find out how you can get involved with UNISON's young workers committee, contact John Lawrence [j.lawrence3@unison.co.uk](mailto:j.lawrence3@unison.co.uk) or get in touch with us on Facebook: [facebook.com/UnisonEasternYM](https://www.facebook.com/UnisonEasternYM).

## Helping young workers to get on in their jobs

**Y**OUNG WORKERS are in danger of becoming a lost generation of workers getting stuck in poorly paid jobs with little or no opportunities to progress as they struggle to access the skills and training they need in their workplaces.

Roughly a third of employers admit that they don't offer any training to their staff, this increases in industries where younger workers are more prominent. Trapped in low-paid jobs without opportunities to progress has a significant effect on young workers, many of whom have had to ask family or friends for loans or shelter to make ends meet, while one in four people have sold off items in their home to pay energy bills just to have hot water and heating.

Trade unions have fought for higher pay, better terms and conditions and access to skills and training for more than 150 years but our movement isn't getting younger so supporting our young workers is a national priority for UNISON.

We want our members to get ahead at work, build confidence and learn new skills to help them progress.

Online learning allows people to develop at their own pace. We enable young workers to access loads of free courses pitched at different levels. CareerZone for example is an extremely valuable resource for careers information while the Open University has loads of free online courses and UNISON members can access learning grants in cases of paid-for tuition.

UNISON runs workshops for our young members to get ahead in their careers. It's your future, your skills and UNISON is proud to lead on supporting young members.

UNISON takes a positive view of apprenticeships but in the current economic climate, many employers are coming under pressure to find ways of cutting costs, and unscrupulous employers may be looking to exploit apprentices, who can be paid less than the minimum wage. We monitor schemes, organise apprentices and get employers to sign up to our Apprenticeship Charter – all contributing towards apprentices' protection.

The Apprenticeship Charter provides a tool to ensure apprenticeships deliver positive outcomes. UNISON actively approaches employers to sign the Charter. The Charter outlines the rights of apprentices and the responsibilities of employers.

If you are stuck at the start and going nowhere fast, join your Union and make work a career, not just a job.



## UNISON's young members say: Be Yourself

PRIDE is a platform for us to say: "We are proud of who we are!"

In June, Cambridge staged its first ever Pride Event at Jesus Green, a national event that celebrates the LGBT+ community and culture.

The long-awaited event was originally planned to launch last year but was pushed to 2019

Our young members want to increase equality and visibility of the LGBT+ community within the city just as it is our Union. They want to create awareness of LGBT+ issues to promote positive conversations, helping to challenge discrimination and negative assumptions.

Pride Events focus on community, inclusivity and celebration. Young members are no stranger to breaking down barriers and this year joined the local communities across the region for diverse festivals of accessible entertainment to highlight barriers that LGBT+ people face.

UNISON's young members attended PRIDE events in the Eastern Region talking to 1000s of people and shared stories and experiences. As well as being able to show support for LGBT+ UNISON members UNISON Eastern raised over £153 for the ILGA charity by asking for donations towards UNISON branded items as well as raffle tickets for a UNISON Rainbow Bear which was very popular!



## **YOUNG ACTIVISTS AND POWERFUL MOMENTS THAT HAVE CHANGED HISTORY**

Violet Potter was a pupil at Burston when she helped lead the strike against the sacking of teachers Tom and Annie Higdon in 1914.

Here we look at some other inspirational young activists who have changed the world.



## Malala Yousafzai

**M**ALALA YOUSAFZAI is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. She is known for human rights advocacy, especially the education of women and children. Born 12 July 1997, Malala’s family did not have enough money for a hospital birth – She was born at home with the help of neighbours and given her first name Malala, meaning “grief-stricken.”

At this time, Taliban militants were taking over the Swat Valley, banning television, music, girls’ education, and women from going shopping. Bodies of beheaded policemen were being displayed in town squares. In Mingora, the Taliban had set an edict that no girls could attend school after 15 January 2009 and enforced them to wear burqas. The group had already blown up more than 100 girls’ schools.

In 2008, Aamer Ahmed Khan of the BBC Urdu website wanted a way of reporting the Taliban’s growing influence in Swat. A correspondent in Peshawar, Abdul Hai Kakar, had contacted local school teacher Ziauddin Yousafzai about a child doing this anonymously but could not find anyone to do it as it was too dangerous and repercussions would be severe. Finally, 11-year-old Malala began her anonymous blog under the pseudonym —Gul Makail.

In 2012 she was shot by a Taliban gunman on her way back from an exam. Gunmen boarded her bus, threatening to shoot everyone unless Malala was identified. As she stood up, she was shot with one bullet, which travelled 18 inches from the side of her left eye, through her neck and landed in her shoulder. Kainat Riaz and Shazia Ramzan were both injured in the shooting but survived.

Malala remained unconscious and in critical condition at the Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology. Offers to treat Yousafzai came from around the

world and, on 15 October, Yousafzai travelled to Britain for further treatment, approved by both her doctors and family. Her plane landed in Birmingham where she was treated at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

**T**he attempt on her life sparked an international outpouring of support and made her “the most famous teenager in the world.” UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Labour former prime minister Gordon Brown visited Malala while she was in the hospital and launched a petition “I am Malala” which was given to President Zardari in Islamabad later that year.

Following her recovery, Yousafzai became a prominent activist for the right to education. Based in Birmingham, she founded the Malala Fund, a non-profit organisation, and in 2013 co-authored *I Am Malala*, an international best-seller.

On 12 July 2015, her 18th birthday, Yousafzai opened a school built with cash from the Malala Fund in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, near the Syrian border, for Syrian refugees. It offers education and training to girls aged 14 to 18 years.

In 2014, Yousafzai stated that she wished to return to Pakistan and with Benazir Bhutto as her inspiration, she would consider running for prime minister: “If I can help my country by joining the government or becoming the prime minister, I would definitely be up for this task.” She repeated this aim in 2015 and again in 2016.

But by 2018 experience had changed her mind, saying: “Now that I have met so many presidents and prime ministers around the world, it just seems that things are not simple and there are other ways that I can bring the change that I want to see.”



The “I am Malala” petition contains three demands:

- We call on Pakistan to agree to deliver education for every child.
- We call on all countries to outlaw discrimination against girls.
- We call on international organisations to ensure the world's 61 million out-of-school children are in education by the end of 2015

## Emma González

**T**WENTY-YEAR-OLD Emma González is a US activist and advocate for gun control.

On 14 February 2018 a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida murdered 17 pupils and staff members armed with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle. González was in the auditorium with other students when the fire alarm went off. They took cover for two hours until police let students out.

Emma González, then just 18, became one of the leaders of this new group that is a student-led political action committee for gun control that advocates for tighter regulations to prevent gun violence. They are known by the Twitter hashtags #NeverAgain, and #EnoughIsEnough.

Three days later, on February 17 Emma gave an 11-minute speech in front of the Broward County Courthouse at a gun control rally in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In the speech she promised to empower and engage with her peers to campaign to change the law. Her speech then went viral.

She and many other teens that survived the shooting began a national campaign to try to end gun violence and she co-founded the gun-control group Never Again MSD.

González continues to be an outspoken activist on gun control, making high-profile media appearances and helping organise the March for Our Lives. This was a nationwide demonstration that included a march held in Washington DC took place on 24 March 2018.

March for Our Lives was conducted in collaboration with the non-profit organisation Every town for Gun Safety. During the march, she delivered a powerful speech where she read out the names of all of the people killed at the school and then stood for six minutes in silence, the length of time the attack went on for.

As a result of the tragedy and the tireless campaigning from Emma and her fellow students, Florida passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act in March 2018, which raises the age to buy a firearm from 18 to 21 and requires a three-day waiting period for most weapons.



# Annalise Peters and the Cambridge McStrike



**O**N 4 SEPTEMBER 2017 McDonald's was hit by its first strike since it opened in the UK in 1974, as well as protests by unions and the public at several restaurants over pay and working conditions. Staff went on strike restaurants in Cambridge and Crayford, south-east London amid concerns over low wages, union recognition and the use of zero-hours contracts.

Cambridge worker Annalise Peters said: "The public and the labour movement have given us so much support and encouragement. It felt like a new workers' movement was being born."

In July that year, food union BFAWU notified McDonalds that workers at the Cambridge and Crayford restaurants would vote on industrial action, they voted 95.7% to strike.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn backed the strike, saying: "Our party offers support and solidarity to the brave McDonald's workers, who are making history today. They are standing up for workers' rights by leading the first ever strike at McDonald's in the UK."

Workers in fast food restaurants such as McDonald's have had to deal with poor working conditions, drastic cuts to hours, and even bullying in the workplace – viewed by many as a punishment for joining a union. Staff have highlighted the real issues they face with zero-hours contracts, some can only afford to live by using the restaurant to eat while others are sharing friends' sofas trying to save deposits for their own accommodation - living in Cambridge or London isn't cheap. Staff as young as 17 were being paid £4.75 an hour.

The following year, further strikes were planned in September and this time Wetherspoons and TGI Fridays workers joined in. The message remained the same - £10 an hour, an end to zero-hours contracts and union recognition.

Annalise took to social media and websites to tell McDonalds the strikers wer-

en't asking for much, but what they asked for had the power to change lives.

McDonald's claimed it had offered fixed-hour contracts to everyone, but it wasn't deemed a serious offer. They made it too difficult for workers to access the new contracts. Workers needed a union so they could solve problems, come together to support each other and improve conditions in the workplace.

The support for the strikes was overwhelming: teachers, lecturers, fire fighters, trade unionists, community and campaign groups all sent messages of solidarity and encouragement that what they were doing was vital for their co-workers. On 4 October McDonalds workers nationwide attended a rally organised in London.

## \$15 per hour and the fight against sexual harassment in the US

On November 29 2012, over 100 fast-food workers from McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, Domino's, Papa John's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut all walked out of their jobs in New York city for higher wages, better working conditions and the right to form a union without retaliation from their managers. It was the largest strike in the history of the fast food industry and workers have continued their Fight for \$15 ever since.



It is estimated that since the Fight \$15 began 22 million workers have or will receive \$68 billion in raises as a result of the movement.

According to a survey in 2016 the Hart Research agency, 40% of female fast food workers reported they had been sexually harassed. McDonald's fast-food restaurant workers voted to stage a one-day strike at outlets in 10 US cities at lunchtime on 18 September 2018. Thousands of young activists like 26-year-olds Adriana Alvarez and Aiesha Meadows went on strike fed up with unwanted attention behind the counters, in the bathrooms and the janitor's closets.

In 2019 strikes continue as workers as young as 16 are accusing supervisors of serious misconduct, including attempted rape, indecent exposure, groping, and sexual offers. The women said they were ignored, mocked, or punished when they reported it. Some had their hours cut back and others were fired.

## Greta Thunberg

**B**ORN IN 2003, Swedish activist Greta Thunberg is at the age of 16, a leading voice for climate change activism. She speaks often about how her autism has shaped her activism and recently joined the Extinction Rebellion protests in London and gave a speech at the House of Commons.

On 20 August 2018, she decided to not attend school until the 2018 Swedish general election on 9 September following heat waves and wildfires during Sweden's hottest summer in over 200 years.

As a 15 year old she spoke at the UN climate change summit, telling governments: "Since our leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago. We have to understand what the older generation has dealt to us, what mess they have created that we have to clean up and live with. We have to make our voices heard."

She wanted the Swedish government to reduce carbon emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement and protested by sitting outside the Riksdag (parliament) every day for three weeks during school hours with the sign Skolstrejk för klimatet (school strike for the climate) which got picked up by social media company We Don't Have Time. She began attracting public attention when they made a video in English that he posted on the company's YouTube channel that had almost 88,000 views.

After the general elections, Thunberg continued to strike only on Fridays, quickly gaining worldwide attention. She inspired school students across the globe to take part in student strikes. As of December 2018, more than 20,000 students had held strikes in at least 270 cities.

Greta Thunberg has inspired a number of other young climate warriors in what has been described as the "Greta Thunberg effect." By March 2019 an estimated 1.4 million students in 112 countries around the world joined her call in striking and protesting. A similar event involving students from 125 countries including the UK took place on 24 May 2019.

In response to her outspoken stance, various politicians have also acknowledged the need to focus on climate change. Ed Miliband, who was responsi-



ble for introducing the Climate Change Act 2008, said: "You have woken us up. We thank you. All the young people who have gone on strike have held up a mirror to our society ... you have taught us all a really important lesson. You have stood out from the crowd."

On 17 January 2019, 10,000 children walked out of school in Belgium to protest inactivity on climate change. In February 2019, in response to Thunberg's efforts, EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker unveiled a proposal to spend hundreds of billions of euros on mitigating climate change beginning in 2021.

Climate issues also played a significant role in European elections in May 2019. In Germany, right-wing populists targeted Greta in their messages against climate science. Green parties nearly doubled their vote to finish second boosting their MEP numbers to a projected 71. Many of the gains came from northern European countries where young people have taken to the streets inspired by Thunberg.

In June 2019, a YouGov poll in Britain found that public concern about the environment had soared to record levels in the UK since Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion had "pierced the bubble of denial."



*"Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope. But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is."*



## Georgie Stone

**G**EORGIE STONE is a transgender girl from Melbourne, Australia. She is an advocate for trans and gender diverse children and young people as well as a full time student. Georgie's visibility along with sharing her experiences and insights has shone a light on the challenges facing gender diverse children and adolescents in Australia.

At the age of 10, Georgie was the youngest Australian ever to be granted permission to take stage one puberty blockers by the family court. Her case became the basis of a 2013 decision to allow access to stage one treatment for transgender children without court involvement, which in 2017 was extended to stage two access to hormone replacement therapy.

"Removing the court requirements for trans kids to access stage two was massive, because that affected so many people," she said. "I think that was my proudest achievement. I can't take full responsibility; there were so many people involved. I also have so many people around me. My family, medical professionals, other young trans people, so I felt comfortable to tell my story because I knew I had support."

Since then Georgie has been a visible and passionate advocate for the removal of the family court from the medical decisions of trans teens.

In 2016 she spoke at a gathering of the Parliamentary Friends of LGBTI Australians about the effects the court process had on her. Later that year Australian Story broadcast About a Girl which followed Georgie's experiences through childhood and court. It refocused the discussion about the rights of transgender children in this country and the challenges they face.

Georgie returned to Canberra in 2017 to deliver her petition to the Attorney General George Brandis, Shadow Attorney General Mark Dreyfus and the leader of the Greens Richard Di Natale asking for legislative reform in accessing stage 2 treatment in Australia.

She is a vocal supporter of the Safe Schools programme, the Justice Connect Stage 2 Access programme and the Royal Children's Hospital Gender Service. She currently serves on the Victorian government's LGBTI education advisory panel.



## New Zealand rediscovers industrial action for the minimum wage

“IF WE DON'T fight for it now then it will be gone, and we will have a situation like the USA where the rich get premium care and the poor die on the streets from curable diseases.”

In early 2018, New Zealand nurse and union member Elizabeth Alice wrote a Facebook post that went viral. Nurses were fighting for better pay and the future of their health service.

Since 2009, The national government introduced anti-union legislation, repressed wage growth, under-funded public services, and stood by as housing prices and the cost of living fast outpaced wage growth. They instituted a wage freeze for public-sector workers, removed the right to tea breaks, introduced 90-day “fire-at-will” legislation and removed the duty on employers to bargain with unions.

In the 2017 elections Labour unexpectedly won.

The health service and communities needed investment and Elizabeth had had enough. Ending her cry for support she said: “Let’s actually do this” - a reference to the Labour’s 2017 election slogan.

Labour’s campaign was positive: restoring workers’ rights, tackling child poverty, climate justice, prison reform, rebuilding the welfare state, and investing in health and education. But once elected, Jacinda Ardern refused

to increase taxes on big business and instead imposed a regime of “budget responsibility,” a nicer name for continuing austerity. As the new year began, and contracts were up for renegotiation, workers started to demonstrate their expectations of the new government — expectations that didn’t include putting up with austerity.

Over the last year, New Zealand has seen strikes among thousands of workers who have not walked off the job for decades. Nurses, teachers, midwives and government workers have been the most prominent.

In July, 30,000 nurses stopped work, their first strike in 30 years. Just weeks later, 29,000 primary school teachers stopped work, their first strike in 24 years. Four thousand government workers at Inland went on strike in the same month, the first time they have taken strike action in 22 years.

Three thousand workers at the Ministry of Justice engaged in lightning strikes and work-to-rule stoppages. With only slight increases in the minimum wage over the past nine years, bus drivers had enough; they refused to collect fares from passengers and went on strike soon after. As one bus driver said: “They need to pay us a decent, living wage. That’s all we want.”

Unions in New Zealand representing public-sector workers have increased their membership to a 30-year high on the back of successful industrial action and wage increases. And there are set to be more strikes over the next year which will continue to test the government’s commitment to austerity.



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Produced with the kind support of  
the Norfolk Community Health,  
Norfolk & Suffolk Foundation Trust  
and Yare Valley UNISON branches

  
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