

## U.S. fast-food workers stop working

1st September, 2013



Fast-food workers in 58 cities in the USA did not go to work on Thursday. They went on strike because they want more money. The workers currently get paid the minimum wage. This was set at \$7.25 in

2009 and has not changed since then. Many workers say they cannot afford to live on that. The price of everything has gone up but their wages have stayed the same for five years. The workers want \$15 an hour, which is double their current rate. Julio Wilson, a cashier at a pizza restaurant, told the BBC he earns \$9 an hour. He said that wasn't enough to support himself and his five-year-old daughter. He said: "I know I'm risking my job, but it's my right to fight for what I deserve."

McDonald's and Burger King both spoke about the strike. They said they did not make decisions about how much to pay workers in most of their restaurants. They said each restaurant is an independent franchise and the manager decides how much to pay the staff. McDonald's profits were over \$5.5 billion in 2011. The burger giants did say that an increase in wages would mean more expensive burgers. America's National Restaurant Association said the wages were low because the staff are young and have little work experience. It said: "Only five per cent of restaurant employees earn the minimum wage and those that do are [mainly] working part-time and half are teenagers."

Sources: BBC / Chicago Tribune / USA Today

### Writing

Working in a fast food restaurant is not a good job. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

fast food / go on strike / minimum wage / afford to live / double / cashier / risking / McDonald's / restaurants / independent / staff / profits / burgers / work experience

### True / False

- Workers in 58 American cities went on strike in Thursday. T / F
- The workers get the same pay today as they did in 2009. T / F
- The fast-food workers want a 50% pay increase. T / F
- One worker said he didn't want to risk losing his job. T / F
- McDonald's said it didn't decide how much to pay its workers. T / F
- McDonald's made over \$5.5 billion in profits last year. T / F
- A restaurant association said wages were low because staff are young. T / F
- Half of all restaurant workers get the minimum wage. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. workers   | a. survive      |
| 2. currently | b. poor         |
| 3. live      | c. reward       |
| 4. earns     | d. presently    |
| 5. deserve   | e. lead to      |
| 6. pay       | f. merit        |
| 7. increase  | g. employees    |
| 8. mean      | h. lowest level |
| 9. low       | i. is paid      |
| 10. minimum  | j. rise         |

### Discussion – Student A

- What do you think of the service in fast-food restaurants?
- How can fast-food restaurants improve?
- Would you pay more for a burger to give the staff a higher salary?
- Should all young people be paid so little?
- How do the public treat fast-food workers?
- Will you say something nice to the staff next time you go to a fast-food restaurant?
- Which is better, working in a fast-food restaurant or on a farm?
- What questions would you like to ask the CEO of McDonald's?

## Phrase Match

- |                                      |                           |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. They went on strike because       | a. over \$5.5 billion     |
| 2. workers say they cannot           | b. himself                |
| 3. he earns                          | c. experience             |
| 4. that wasn't enough to support     | d. they want more money   |
| 5. it's my right to fight            | e. \$9 an hour            |
| 6. each restaurant is an independent | f. time                   |
| 7. McDonald's profits were           | g. afford to live on that |
| 8. an increase in wages would mean   | h. for what I deserve     |
| 9. have little work                  | i. franchise              |
| 10. working part-                    | j. more expensive burgers |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about working in a fast-food restaurant?
- Is \$7.25 an hour OK for a fast-food worker?
- Is it wrong the minimum wage in the USA hasn't changed since 2009?
- What do people do when they cannot afford to live?
- Do you think the workers deserve to have their pay doubled?
- Would you work in a fast-food restaurant?
- Is it right to go on strike?
- What questions would you like to ask the cashier Julio Wilson?

## Spelling

- they cannot rdaffo to live on that
- eloubd their current rate
- a hsrecia at a pizza restaurant
- that wasn't enough to rtospu himself
- his five-year-old hdargtue
- fight for what I veedres
- they did not make disoiscn
- an pnindeetend franchise
- McDonald's sotfrpi were over \$5.5 billion
- an niecrsae in wages
- have little work renepcieex
- restaurant lmeyepose

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. a	4. i	5. f
6. c	7. j	8. e	9. b	10. h

## Role Play

### Role A – Fast-food worker

You think a fast-food worker is the worst job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are good about their jobs. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): cashier, English teacher or farm worker.

### Role B – Cashier

You think a cashier is the worst job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are good about their jobs. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): fast-food worker, English teacher or farm worker.

### Role C – English teacher

You think an English teacher is the worst job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are good about their jobs. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): cashier, fast-food worker or farm worker.

### Role D – Farm worker

You think a farm worker is the worst job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are good about their jobs. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): cashier, English teacher or fast-food worker.

## Speaking – Low-paid jobs

Rank these low-paid jobs and share your rankings with your partner. Put the job you would least like to do at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| • fast-food worker | • movie theater usher   |
| • dishwasher       | • amusement park worker |
| • cashier          | • English teacher       |
| • farm worker      | • home care worker      |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.