

GMB Scotland Motion to STUC Conference 3018

Motion 9 – *Brexit Impact: Protecting Scotch Whisky and Spirits' Jobs*

Congress, last year GMB Scotland stood before you and warned about the impact of Brexit on our valuable whisky and spirits sector.

We stand before you again - this time far more informed about the value of what we are defending but regrettably no more confident about what our politicians are doing to support our objectives.

Congress, there is a worrying sense of complacency about the realities of Brexit and what this will mean for trade union members.

Here in Scotland, over £12 billion worth of exports supporting 134,000 jobs are dependent on trade with the European Union. And economic forecasts warn about the prospect of anything between 30,000 and 80,000 jobs lost to the Scottish economy as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Food and beverages contributes over £1.8 billion of that value to the EU - with whisky and spirits generating nearly £1.2 billion within it.

Congress, it is our second most valuable export sector behind North Sea oil - and the jewel in the crown of Scotland's world class food and drink industry, supporting over 12,000 Scottish jobs.

That's the findings of Scotland's most reputable economic forecasters, the Fraser of Allander Institute, from their report commissioned by GMB Scotland, '*Brexit and the Sectors of Scottish Economy*'.

The report should sober-up anyone repeating the empty rhetoric of a *'jobs first Brexit'*.

Congress, that phrase is about as meaningless and dangerous as the Brexiteer- mantra of *'take back control'*.

And Congress, it is evident to anyone that this is not a government that is in control of Brexit.

It's evident in our union's pursuit of David Mundell, the Secretary of State for Scotland, to gain the protections our whisky and spirits sector so badly needs for the future. It is deeply regrettable that our efforts to date have met only evasion and frustration.

It's evident in the panicked public u-turn of Number 10 to the media reports speculating that the Geographical Indication status of our world-famous whisky products will be up for grabs in future trade negotiations with the United States – an issue on which GMB challenged the Scotch Whisky Association last Friday.

Congress, it is very clear that the only people we can trust are ourselves. Our movement has to fully recognise the clear and present dangers that Brexit poses and be resolute in the fight for our members' livelihoods.

Defending our members' interests must be our priority. We need to campaign to pressure a fractured Tory government and multi-national employers driven only by profit, to invest in and sustain our members' jobs in the face of Brexit and trade upheaval.

Congress, we don't want Scotland's whisky and spirits industry to become a victim of Brexit complacency.

And on the day that Diageo confirmed a £150 million package for Scottish whisky tourism, let me say this:

We don't want our members' livelihoods to fade away to a historical trail for wealthy tourists in the decades to come, their industry and skills a museum of what once was – we've had enough of that in Scotland over the last thirty years.

That's why we call on this Congress to campaign relentlessly for these jobs and this industry, because we know that we need these interventions and protections to ensure the future of working class jobs and communities.

I move.

ENDS