



HOUSE OF LORDS

Select Committee on Communications

Corrected oral evidence: The Advertising Industry

Monday 15 January 2018

3.20 pm

Members present: Lord Gilbert of Panteg (The Chairman); Lord Gordon of Strathblane; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Baroness Stowell of Beeston.

Evidence Session No. 17

Heard in Public

Questions 165 - 170

Witnesses

I: Farah Bahsoon; Mark Carrington; Gerard Devney.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of Witnesses

Farah Bahsoon, Mark Carrington and Gerard Devney.

Q165 **The Chairman:** Welcome. This is an inquiry of the House of Lords Committee on Communications. We have been looking at the advertising industry, and in particular the skills that it needs for the future in the post-Brexit era. We have had evidence from a range of witnesses, and today we welcome students and graduates in the subject area to give us evidence. We are very grateful to you for giving us your time. We are joined by Farah Bahsoon and Mark Carrington.

The session will be recorded and will be on the written record on the parliamentary website, which you will be able to study if you wish. Before we ask you some questions, perhaps you could briefly introduce yourselves and tell us a bit about your background and your relevance to the subject that we are studying.

Farah Bahsoon: I did my undergraduate in advertising and brand management at Manchester Met. I went on to do my master's degree in international public relations, where I focused on crisis reputation management in social media. I have just started my PhD, where I am furthering my master's research and starting to look into social media and crisis reputation management, but with a focus on false advertising. I have just started it. I have picked three case studies. I have determined that Johnson & Johnson talcum powder will be one case study, Ratners the jewellers another, and for the third I am contemplating whether to do Danone and its yoghurts, and the crisis that it had recently.

Mark Carrington: I am not quite as distinguished as Farah just yet. I am doing the master's in public relations at the moment. I am about to start my second term tomorrow. In my first term, I completed a module in digital and social media marketing, PR strategy and theory planning. I have also had a placement at a PR agency for the last three months.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: What was your first degree in?

Mark Carrington: International relations and modern history.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Was that here?

Mark Carrington: No, that was at UEA, the University of East Anglia, and nothing to do with the creative industries. I have gone sideways.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: While we are on background, you have just finished your placement and will then start full-time study.

Mark Carrington: No, I am currently on the full one-year master's course here at MMU and I start my second term of that tomorrow.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I see. You are studying and doing the placement at the same time.

Mark Carrington: Yes, I have got myself an internship at the same time, alongside my studies.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Are you working, Farah?

Farah Bahsoon: Yes, I set up my own marketing consultancy about seven years ago while undertaking my degrees. I went full time into the marketing consultancy this August.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Are you working for yourself?

Farah Bahsoon: Yes, I am. I have five clients in completely different sectors. I am working on advertising, some PR but not a major focus on that, and marketing.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: That is very impressive.

Farah Bahsoon: Thank you.

The Chairman: We want to start by talking about advertising as a career. Lord Gordon will ask the first questions.

Q166 **Lord Gordon of Strathblane:** Somebody from a production company who sent us written evidence said that they thought that a lot of the shine had come off advertising as a career and that young people were not attracted to it. Clearly, they are wrong. What attracted you to advertising?

Farah Bahsoon: This sounds a little silly, but I do not know if you have heard of the programme "Mad Men".

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: I have heard of it.

Farah Bahsoon: I was watching that and I thought it would be just like that. Then I read more about it and it was about branding and advertising creativity. I always thought marketing and advertising were just strategic and always thinking of what the customer wants; I did not realise that there was a creative side as well. That is what I liked about it: the fact that I could do strategic, theoretical and creative work all in one role. I have always wanted a job where I would go to work and enjoy my day. That shouted it out to me.

Mark Carrington: I pick up on the creativity element of it. Throughout my studies at secondary education, I was keenly interested in the creative subjects. After my first degree, I fell into being a manager at a leading supermarket for two years. I picked up an understanding of how business operates and the skills you need to be in leadership, but I always knew that I wanted to return to a job that would allow me to use my creativity. That is when I fell into public relations and advertising. I always wanted to do that, but I was led more towards a business. I have been told to get a real job before, so that is how I have come into it: through the business and creativity sides of it.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: You then decided to do university courses. In a way, I imagine that a lot of advertising can be taught at

university and a vital ingredient that perhaps cannot: flair. The thing that separates the very good from the perfectly ordinary is something a lot of people think you are born with. Would you agree?

Farah Bahsoon: To an extent. I never knew I was as creative as I am now—not to be big-headed. I thought I would be more strategic, but over the years, through practice and through university telling me, “Do not just think inside the box. Try all the different ways”, I have decided that I can be creative. You also need to learn it. I do not think that everyone is born with creativity or a strategic mind.

Mark Carrington: I always see it as entrepreneurship. There is something in that. I do not know if you are necessarily born with it or if it is the way you are brought up, your surroundings, your family and the lessons that they teach you. It has a lot to do with being a natural leader or having a creative spirit.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: In some ways, the same talents that a good creative spirit has could also lead them to start a company. Why would you want to help the marketing of the company rather than start it yourself, if you spot a gap in the market?

Mark Carrington: It depends what sector you are in, I suppose. Long term, I would like to start my own agency. That is a plan 10 years down the line. If I was to work in the retail sector doing PR for a client, I would not necessarily want to open my own retail business. I would like to use the expertise that I am learning on this course to help it get what it needs, and then move on and open my own agency.

Farah Bahsoon: University gave me confidence. It opened more opportunities. If I approached an agency, I would probably start off as an assistant or lower than that. I would not be paid. I did five internships while I was doing my master’s, and I got no pay at all. I know that has changed: there are now placement opportunities through university.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: How long were the placements for?

Farah Bahsoon: That was down to me. The shortest one was for a month. I had another that was three months. On another I stayed on for a year. This may have been too long. However, it is now one of my clients, so I kept with it.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: You are getting your money back.

Farah Bahsoon: Exactly. It worked out well for me, but I knew that I was not going to get much out of one of them, so I ended it after a month.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Do you have any strong views on internships?

Farah Bahsoon: Everyone disagrees with me when I say that I did not mind not getting paid, because I was so grateful for the opportunity.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Even for a year?

Farah Bahsoon: For the year, he was incredibly flexible with me and he gave me a budget. I do not know any other intern who would handle and control the budget. If I was someone else who was a bit tighter with budget or was not as flexible with my studies, I definitely would not have lasted a year. I managed to get a bit out of him. Lunches were paid for, and now and again travel. I know it is still not enough, but I now have his name on my CV and he is one of my clients. He has told other companies about me, so I have gained more clients from him. It has worked out for me.

The Chairman: Can I pause to welcome our third witness, Gerard Devney, as he takes his seat? I think he has been standing in a session elsewhere in the university.

Gerard Devney: I am afraid so, yes. Sorry for my late joining.

The Chairman: Not at all. Thank you very much for joining us. I have explained to your colleagues that we are the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications, and our inquiry is into the advertising industry. I was just talking to your colleagues about advertising as a career.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: We are trying to work out what led you into advertising in the first place. Many young people, I think quite wrongly, look at advertising somewhat cynically. They do not regard it as an idealistic thing that young people do. To them, people who advertise have sold out. What attracted you to advertising?

Gerard Devney: I suppose that is quite a popular myth about advertising and marketing. For me, it was a creative industry that helped to effect greater communication of products and services to the people who need them, and greater access and availability of those services so they could have a first-world experience of western life in a growing capitalist, commercial country such as the UK. That is my limited experience of it. That is what the benefits of marketing and advertising can be to communities.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: At the point at which you came in, I was asking what led the witnesses to go for a university course in the subject. What do you think a university can teach you about advertising? What do you, in fact, get taught in advertising?

Gerard Devney: It prepares you with a range of skills that you would be hard-pressed to learn all at one time if you were just working at it in the field. It prepares you with a skill set that allows you to go into the environment fully capable of doing such things as press releases, marketing campaigns, accommodation, and understanding the digital impact and delivery and how it can be utilised, given the burgeoning trend for people to access communications on digital media. Without that tuition, you might get wholly inappropriate campaigns that miss the

target and do not get to the markets they are trying to communicate their products and services to. It is vital.

Q167 **Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** Thinking a step back from where you are now, or several steps back in all your cases, to when you were at school and thinking about where you might go next, do you think that your schools encouraged you or helped you? Were they instrumental in getting you to take that first step towards, in your case, an undergraduate degree unrelated to what you are doing now?

Mark Carrington: It was completely unrelated, yes.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Tell us a bit about how this industry appears to people before they get to the point of higher education.

Farah Bahsoon: Unfortunately, in my sixth form, the only thing that was somewhat similar to my course was business studies, and only an aspect of that—the marketing module. I did not really get an insight into advertising. I was lucky that we had a careers hub in the school. I went there and said, “I like marketing, and I like business, but I also want to do something creative”. They suggested a few courses. One of them was advertising. I also enjoyed branding. This was the only university that does it; the University of Manchester also does advertising, but it does not do branding; it does marketing, with a module on advertising. I came to the open day and really enjoyed it. It looked hands-on. There are lots of practicals in there.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: The way your school reacted, it had it in its sights as something that you might do with your particular aspirations?

Farah Bahsoon: Yes. We touched on branding and advertising in business studies and marketing. They were always aware that people could take that route, and that advertising was a really reputable course to take.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: That is great. How about the other two witnesses?

Mark Carrington: At my secondary and sixth form, there was no business studies, media or anything of the sort. At the time, it would not have even entered my realm of understanding that I could go into an industry like that. It was very much about English, history and your classics.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: What kind of school were you at?

Mark Carrington: The secondary school was a state school in the inner city.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Why was this kind of thing not featured on the curriculum? Was it a posh school?

Mark Carrington: Definitely not, no. It was a Catholic school. You were expected to study religious education, which I did as a GCSE. It was quite a small school, so it might not have had the resources to offer such courses. It may have changed since then. For me, there was no chance of going into a creative industry. It was very much about doing English, history or sciences.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I am guessing that when you read international law it was not in the back of your mind that you would end up in the advertising industry.

Mark Carrington: Exactly, yes.

Gerard Devney: I have a very similar experience to Mark. I am a little older. I also went to a state comprehensive Roman Catholic school, and it did not have such courses. It did not even have media studies at A-level. I took up psychology and English language, which is what I pursued as a combined award at university at undergraduate level, looking at psychology and linguistics. It was with an understanding that it would help me to get into the realm of advertising.

I was interested in how mass communications reached their markets. That was something that I had to develop an interest in, alongside an understanding of how that was conveyed through, at the time, traditional media: largely TV and the papers. The support to enable me to jump into an advertising course was not really available to me, even at the UCAS application stage.

At that time—a few years back now—although there might be more specific courses in universities that I could approach to gain an understanding of the specific field of advertising, I thought that psychology and linguistics, having already done well in those at A-level, would be a springboard for me. Combining those areas, I thought there would be a depth of research available to gain an understanding of how people worked and how their minds approached particular communication aspects, and that if I could take that into a trade position it would hopefully be advertising at that stage.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Was that wrong?

Gerard Devney: Was it wrong at the university?

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Your perception that a more broadly based education—

Gerard Devney: I think it was wrong. There needs to be a more specific doorway or access route to advertising. Certainly as it stands today, because of the breadth of subject areas that advertising has grown to accommodate, it would need its own subject course material, as evidenced by some of the courses run here by MMU. In the late 1990s, the language and psychology schools did not even really talk to one another. When I had conversations with professors there at that time,

they recognised the need for them to work together better and effect a better understanding.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I will turn this round and ask you to respond slightly differently. If I said to you that a broadly based liberal education, as you might call it, would be a perfectly decent preparation for eventually taking up your professional interest in advertising, would you agree or disagree? What is missing from that?

Farah Bahsoon: I agree.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Liberal is with a small "l", by the way.

Farah Bahsoon: Regardless of the circumstances, I would have always picked what I have done. I do not think I fell into it; I was made to do what I am doing. I enjoy every aspect of what I am doing.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: You do not think that your school education impeded you; it actually helped you.

Farah Bahsoon: I genuinely do. I was not as confident in school. I was doing business studies, and as soon as that module came up I thought, "This is definitely for me".

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: You are a natural, then.

Farah Bahsoon: I would not say that. I definitely would say that this is the course for me. As much as I would love to do psychology or whatever, I do not think that would have been for me. It would not have fit with my personality, or how I answer things and work on things. I have chosen the right career path for me. I am very lucky to be able to say that. I do not think many people had the opportunity I did.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Of the three of you, you are the one who actively saw these opportunities while you were still at school. It sounds as if neither of the other two did. Do you feel that you would have got to where you are now more quickly if you had been encouraged at an earlier stage?

Mark Carrington: Definitely.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I do not want to lead you; I am trying to explore the education system.

Mark Carrington: Like I say, I knew that I was creative, that I enjoyed that passion for creativity, and had a business mind. I knew I would always come to this. If my school had offered business studies, media or even a student careers service, or anything of the sort, that might have hurried the process along, because there are people who finished their secondary education at the same time I did who might have had a career in advertising for four or five years now. I am yet to properly start mine. It has impeded it.

The Chairman: I do not want to dwell on your particular school, but it

seems to me that not only did the school not offer anything that was particularly relevant to your interest, but nobody in the school spotted your passion and encouraged you as an individual. Is that right?

Mark Carrington: I was, not to blow my own trumpet, a straight-A student and head boy. I never showed any cause for concern, I would say. It was always just assumed that, "Mark is getting on fine. He's doing this and going to go off to uni". No one would have ever approached me. At the time, there was nobody to whom I could have gone to ask, "How do I get a job in advertising?" That is not to make my school sound completely terrible; it has taught me skills, not only in English, history and politics, which I have used, but the transferrable skills of being able to write and communicate well, but not necessarily for a creative industry.

Gerard Devney: A broader base of understanding is valuable in the advertising industry—as I have come through it, anyway. I remember seeing brochures for companies that were recruiting for advertising execs. They were all from different backgrounds. Some had MAs in history and such things, and had come to it through that before specific courses had sent them down that particular path. Definitely, had those gateways been available to me sooner, I would have entered the industry a lot sooner.

I had gone through direct marketing into events management, then into public sector communications. The breadth of experience I now have requires me to go beyond the master's stage to PhD level, where I can home in on one of my specific interests to a depth that is well served by my experience in the arts. That is what my PhD is looking at now: arts marketing specifically, which requires specific insights, because it works a little differently from other sectors of marketing and advertising.

I long had a passion to get into public relations and advertising after doing my university course. It felt a little like a difficult gateway to come through, even though I knew people had done it before. A more specific course might have looked a bit better. If we have a CV pile and are questioning how to sort out the wheat from the chaff, we might think, "Anybody who does not have this accredited course from this institution does not know the skills and services that are required within this industry to hit the ground running. We have to train them up once they get into the industry", even if they had good grades at university.

It was a long period, with several years of experience in direct marketing and public service communications, before I took up the master's, which has led on to the PhD course. Finally, I have found my way in what I want to study and how I want to develop. The breadth of experience has been useful, but a more specific point of access would have been expedient to that end.

The Chairman: That is very interesting. This is very important, because in a post-automation age, careers in the creative sector, not just in advertising, will be the great, fulfilling careers that deliver on people's

potential. If some people are not going in the direction of those careers, because schools are either not thinking about it or not providing the education, that is a serious social issue, as well as an issue for individuals. We are very interested in this issue.

- Q168 **Baroness Stowell of Beeston:** I am going to ask you some questions about diversity. I think we should see this topic as a smooth segue from what we have just been talking about. Although I am interested in the issue of diversity in respect of black, Asian and ethnic minorities, a switch goes off in our brain when the word “diversity” is mentioned, and we think that that is what we are talking about. But what we have just been discussing is just as important—the potential barriers in the way of people getting into the advertising industry and in the way of it being a very diverse workforce with all sorts of people working in it.

I am interested to know what barriers you think there are, if any, to people from BAME or women getting into it. Because of what you have just said, I would also like you to talk more about whether you feel there are barriers in terms of your own background or for people from a different social class. Maybe it is the fact that they just do not know about it, and it is not a clear enough opportunity for people to pursue when they are at school and thinking about their options.

Farah Bahsoon: A major barrier is that it is so competitive. Maybe that puts some people off joining in.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Is it competitive to enter?

Farah Bahsoon: It is competitive to enter and climb up the career ladder. I had a few jobs in Manchester, which I was doing well in, and my salary was increasing. I thought, “This is my time to go to London, join the big companies and make something of my career”. There was no chance I was getting in. I was not getting into an assistant pay level, when I was a little higher than an exec in the north-west. That put me off London a lot. If I had got into the jobs that I wanted in London, I might be further down in my career right now. That was a major barrier for me.

On social class, I do not know. I was very lucky and privileged. I went to a private school from year 7 to year 10. Our IT was a GNVQ, which is five GCSEs. We did creativity in IT, so that enabled me to think, “I am creative. Advertising and marketing is the career I want to take”. For others who do not have IT or business studies, that might be a barrier, like you said. The competition put me off a little, but I thought, “No, I am going to give it a try because it is what I really want to do”. I do not think there are enough jobs out there for the amount of people. Out of the people who graduated from my advertising course, only five got a job straightaway in the creative field. The rest were doing different things or going on a gap year.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: This was when you did your first degree.

Farah Bahsoon: This was when I did my first degree, back in 2009 or so. I do not know what it is like now, but I was shocked to see on

LinkedIn that only a handful of us were in the advertising or marketing field.

Mark Carrington: There is an issue social mobility. I do not know whether it goes into the education system more broadly. My partner works as a teacher in a private school, and I hear about the opportunities that the students she teaches there get. Compared to the education that I got, it is the polar opposite. In my undergraduate and in this master's, a lot of the people I have met have been privately educated or had quite a middle-class or affluent childhood. Whether or not that helps, I have not had that, yet I am on the same master's course as they are. In some ways, it holds people back, but only if they choose to let it hold them back.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: As somebody who has never worked in advertising, I find it quite interesting, having taken evidence from people—and this was reflected in our discussion on the last group of questions—that the advertising industry clearly requires very good skills and to be very highly educated. It is a very professional industry to work in. Yet it does not seem to be one that gets much profile as a career pathway when people are at school or starting to choose what they want to do in education terms. I assume that it is also a potential career opportunity for people who have not necessarily had the kind of education that you have had. As an industry, it ought to be available to all sorts of people with all levels of education and attainment to work in. It does not sound as though that is your experience; you need to be highly educated. At the same time, it is not very well advertised.

Mark Carrington: Yes. Like you say, if we are advertising to a whole spectrum of people, the advertisers need to be that spectrum of people. It is no good having one section of society deciding what messages everyone is going to consume. It has to be reflective of society. There is something in the idea that you need to be highly educated. I decided to do the master's, instead of trying to segue from being a manager in a supermarket to having a job as an entry-level marketing assistant, only because I realised that if I wanted to go to a higher strategic level, which is what I want to do, in quite a short timeframe, I needed that higher level of education. That is not to say that I could not have got a job straight out as an undergraduate if I had done a related advertising degree and be at that senior level now. I agree that you need that higher level of education if you want to go to the higher levels of the industry.

Gerard Devney: I largely agree. To get to that strategic level, you need to have a range of academic understanding and critical awareness of what is going on in the industry, so that you can be relevant at a board level. If you are trying to profile public relations or advertising around the board table, you can have well-grounded arguments about how you are going to deliver what the company wants.

My own experience of barriers is that the older I have got the more seriously I have had to take on the academic pursuit and the in-depth

inquiry into particular, more niche, varieties of advertising and marketing in order to be able to carry some welly.

I have spoken on open days here. They are not always as forthcoming on work experience for someone who is trying to make a career break, for example after doing a master's. When I was thinking about doing that and going to work for agencies, it was not as obvious a step as I had hoped. That is probably down to a burnout factor, which should be considered. The creative industry in particular is a high-pressure industry. There is a potential for creatives to burn out after they have flogged themselves to death in low-paying entry-level jobs without getting that jump up to management. A good way to bridge that is through academic qualifications, either getting the master's or, subsequent to that, as I am doing now, looking at a very specific area at PhD level.

Q169 The Chairman: Can we move on to the subject of Brexit? First, how does it affect you as individuals? To the extent that you are aware, how do you think it affects other students and people you work with, particularly if you are in a position to tell us how it affects international students and students from EU countries?

Farah Bahsoon: At the university, the market research might be impacted. Researchers and professors, for example, might be impacted. There is a positive, I guess, in that more UK students will be able to get a place on the course, and unfortunately we will have a drop in EU students. Jobwise, for me—or would you rather I just discussed students?

The Chairman: No, give your outlook.

Farah Bahsoon: Like I said, I have recently started up on my own. As a freelancer, I can get work on other sites online. I used to work with a guy who set up his company in Brussels. I presume in the future that the website I go to to get new business will have different rates for UK citizens or will work differently. That might impact my business. I am also doing my PhD in false advertising, and I think the advertising laws will differentiate; the GDPR is one example. I am not sure whether we will still have to abide by it or to what extent. I have been studying the ASA rules. I do not know if they are going to change in the near future, so I will have to do a new course. There will be a drop in ROI and a different spend on advertising. That is all I can say at the moment.

Mark Carrington: Who is to know with Brexit? Having international students on the course with me and working in a group of four last term, what they know from the places they have lived in and the different things they studied culturally had an impact on the final report we presented. It was a different way of thinking, and it brought their experiences and culture to the table. If we cut that out, if we stop that, it will put us at a disadvantage. If we still want to be the leading advertising force in Europe, we need Europe to help us to do that.

At a personal level, I would like to do either further study or work experience in the Netherlands, which is quite renowned for its

advertising. How will that work out in the aftermath of Brexit? Who knows whether I will be freely allowed to do that? That could have an impact on me. Most importantly, it is about having international students on courses and having that freedom so that we can work over there, they can work over here and we can learn from each other. That is going to be impeded.

Gerard Devney: I largely agree. The diversity in the UK workplace would be affected by that. We already think it is quite slim when it comes to the backgrounds of people who come to work in the UK advertising industry, and that will be inhibited by Brexit. On a personal level, some of the studies that I have been looking at on audience development in the performing arts, which have been really successful in other countries, might not now see the light of day. It might be harder for me to access those programmes of activity and research them.

Some of the things I saw going on in Brussels—on social inclusion policies, how the arts can be provided for all, marketing to particular segments of the public and how you can include them in an artistic process—were really heart-warming, mind-blowing, gobsmacking and innovative. That would definitely be of benefit to the UK arts market and marketing its availability.

It will probably have a detrimental impact, but I also think about investment in the UK and the northern powerhouse being set up. We might be steadying our boat a little and looking within our own borders at how we can reinvest capital not just in the capital of London but in other places such as Manchester and the northern powerhouse beyond that. The reinvestment of finance there might be more of a national pride story if we could make it work in the future. That is perhaps a bit of an optimistic outlook. There are pros and cons to Brexit and its impact. That is it in a nutshell, for me.

The Chairman: We have talked to senior people in the industry and big leaders of agencies in London. They all say, "It is very important for our business model that we attract talent from around the world and have proper global operations. When we pitch in the Middle East, Africa or across Europe, having an internationally diverse team is really, really important to us". They fear that, as a consequence of Brexit, London will lose its international appeal and just become another player in the field. One of the public policy ways of addressing that is for Britain to say, "We are going to make London ever more attractive, because they want to be based in London". That has an impact, does it not, on the rest of the UK, if the response is to say that we have to do everything we can to make London ever more attractive in this global environment? How does that affect places such as Manchester, and people like you who have not made your careers in London?

Mark Carrington: I actively chose to come to Manchester, because I felt that this was the emerging place for the creative industry in the UK. If they were to double down on London and say, "This is what we are going to do to London, and it is going to be the go-to place", that will reverse

everything and all the hard work that has gone into building this powerhouse in Manchester. There is that spark here. It would be an error to create silos between Manchester and London, and for it not to be at the forefront.

Farah Bahsoon: When I started university, London was the place to be. If you wanted to be creative, you just had to make it in London. It was like New York. Now I read that there is MediaCity. We have the big corporations moving here. Chapel Street aims to be the creative hub. If I were to start my undergrad now, I would definitely stay in Manchester. We have the talent and the opportunities here. Unfortunately, I entered when London was the place to be, but I did not make it anyway.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: It sounds like London's loss is Manchester's gain.

Farah Bahsoon: Thank you. I am still bitter about it, though.

Gerard Devney: That London-centric view of the industry needs to continue to be addressed. Manchester is a great locale in which to establish a comparative opponent to London and say, "You do not have to go to London for these things". That growth in this area should continue. I see no reason why it should not. I have taken quite a lot of pride in staying northern. I am from Halifax. I still joke that they want to throw me back over the Pennines. I enjoy being this close to a large city. Leeds was an option, but it was a lot more finance-oriented there. For the creative industries, such as advertising, it is Manchester. For a long time, since I started work up here—I started with direct marketing, then event management and went into public communications—I have felt that this is definitely a place to grow and develop as a resource, both for me and for the north.

Farah Bahsoon: I have one more comment about Brexit. I fear that UK universities will cut ties with placements. The "international" has been dropped from "international public relations", and it is now "public relations". When I joined and did my master's, I think we got to choose from three counties. I cannot remember what they were, but one was Sweden. That was the year they were dropping it, but it was too late to drop the "international" because we could not swap any placements. Once Brexit happens, they are going to completely cut ties with placements. As you said, how are we going to invite international talent? Universities need to promise people that we will still have placements based abroad.

Q170 **The Chairman:** Do you have anything you would like to add or anything you think we might have asked about but did not?

Farah Bahsoon: What do we think will happen after Brexit?

The Chairman: It is something that we debate all day, every day, where we come from. All the evidence is very mixed.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I think it will be fine. Do not worry.

The Chairman: Baroness Stowell thinks it will be fine.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Nothing is as bad as you think it is going to be.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Or as good.

The Chairman: Can I thank you for your evidence? It has been very interesting. Your background and the stories you told us about how you came into this area were very interesting to us in thinking about our report as we get into it. The evidence in general has been fascinating. Thank you very much, and every success in your careers.