

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Fake News, HC 363

Wednesday 16 May 2018

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Damian Collins (Chair); Julie Elliott; Paul Farrelly; Simon Hart; Julian Knight; Ian C. Lucas; Christian Matheson; Brendan O'Hara; Jo Stevens.

Questions 2761 - 3145

Witness

I: Jeff Silvester, Chief Operating Officer, AggregateIQ

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [AggregateIQ](#)



Examination of witness

Jeff Silvester

Q2761 **Chair:** Good afternoon. Welcome to this further session of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into disinformation and fake news. We are very grateful, Jeff Silvester, to you for travelling out from Canada to join us for this evidence session today.

Jeff Silvester: I appreciate the invitation.

Chair: We are grateful to have the chance to put our questions to you in person. Also thank you as well for the written statement that you prepared and sent in. That has now been published by the Committee, so it will be available for people to view from now on the Committee website as well. We have also published some correspondence that we were given on Monday between the Electoral Commission and Facebook, and with the permission of the Electoral Commission, we have published that. I hope, Mr Silvester, that you and your representatives have received copies of that as well.

Jeff Silvester: We have that, yes.

Q2762 **Chair:** Great, thank you. Just for the benefit of the record and the Committee, although you touch on this a little bit in the written statement, I wonder if you could just give us a bit of background towards your decision with Zack Massingham to set up AggregateIQ and the work you have done before then. Could you tell us when you set the company up and what you were doing before you set the company up?

Jeff Silvester: Sure. First of all, again, thank you for inviting me. It is a pleasure to be able to come and to speak with you in person and to be able to give you some factual information about what we do.

Zack and I met in 2012, when working for a software company. I had already been working there and we hired him on board. Previous to that, I had done some work in politics. I worked for a Liberal Member of Parliament in the Canadian Parliament and volunteered and worked on elections sort of at every level in Canada. Separately, Zack had started doing some work in and around campaigns and as part of that, he found that a lot of the processes that they were undertaking did not make a lot of sense from a business perspective. That is when he first conceived of and created AggregateIQ. He registered the domain in 2011 and used it as a tradename.

When he and I met and quickly found some shared interests, we then decided to work together. In November of 2013—I just want to make sure—we incorporated AggregateIQ. One of our early clients was a company by the name of SCL. It was Mr Wylie, who I knew previously, who introduced us to SCL and they asked us to do some work for them and we did that work. Some of our other earlier work is really around



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creating webpages, online advertising and software development. That is predominantly what we do.

Q2763 **Chair:** Sure. Sometimes when two people get together and set up a company, they want to work together, but they have different skillsets. The skillsets of Zack and yourself, were they different at that time? Was one of you more technical and one of you more political or a mix of both?

Jeff Silvester: Zack has a bit more of a business background than I do. He provides more of a business view into problem-solving, whereas I come from an IT background. My education is in computer engineering technology, whereas his is in business. When we came together, I had been working, like I said, for a Member of Parliament and he decided not to run again. I had been working in IT originally, then worked for the Member of Parliament for a time and then went back into IT and we were making software at that time. When we got together, when we met, we were sort of surprised that we had not met each other previously, because we had been in and around a lot of the same places. So Zack's background is in business, whereas mine is in the IT side of things.

Q2764 **Chair:** So Zack did not have much experience in IT before you entered into business together, would that be correct?

Jeff Silvester: No. He had some, but it was a different type of experience in IT. I think he had done some work with respect to some websites, where he would create websites for people when he was younger. He is certainly not unfamiliar with IT, but my level of experience in information technology is a lot deeper, that is all.

Q2765 **Chair:** How did you first meet Chris Wylie?

Jeff Silvester: I can't recall the first meeting, but it was back in 2005. He was still in high school at the time and he was a volunteer on a campaign that I was volunteering on for that same Member of Parliament that I mentioned earlier. He and I met then. We just did a few common things on the campaign in terms of door to door and this type of thing. He subsequently wanted to volunteer with that same Member of Parliament, so he was volunteering in our office. Then I helped to speak with the Member about him volunteering in Ottawa and then we got to know each other a little bit during that time. Then subsequently, after he graduated high school, he went to Ottawa and worked in the Member's office and then in the Liberal Leader's office in Ottawa.

Q2766 **Chair:** He sounds like someone you would probably consider a friend, someone you worked with on and off, you have known for a number of years.

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I have known him, like I said, since 2005. Over the time between then until somewhat recently, we kept in occasional contact with an e-mail or something like this.

Q2767 **Chair:** He introduced you to SCL?



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Jeff Silvester: Correct, yes. He introduced us to SCL to do some work in 2013.

Q2768 **Chair:** That was the work in Trinidad, is that right?

Jeff Silvester: Trinidad and Tobago, correct.

Q2769 **Chair:** The scope of work for Trinidad seems quite broad and certainly very technical. Your company was relatively young at that stage.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2770 **Chair:** Had you engaged in work like that before?

Jeff Silvester: I had done software development work before, yes, and Zack had done online advertising work before, but in Trinidad, online advertising was not what we were doing there. The Trinidad work was to create a political customer relationship management software tool. That was the bulk of the work. It was a custom tool for that country, so they go door to door and find out who their supporters are, communicate with the volunteers and send SMSs out to encourage people to come to events. That was that tool.

Q2771 **Chair:** Sure. When did you first meet Alexander Nix?

Jeff Silvester: Oh, gosh. I certainly had a phone call with him previous, like as we were talking about the work for Trinidad and Tobago. I think the first time I met him was in 2014, maybe March-ish. I do not know, I do not recall exactly, but in around the beginning of 2014.

Q2772 **Chair:** But you did not meet while you were working on the Trinidad project?

Jeff Silvester: No, we did not meet.

Q2773 **Chair:** Were you working from your office in Canada or were you—

Jeff Silvester: Correct. Well, in Trinidad we had not established an office, everyone was working from home.

Q2774 **Chair:** The decision for you to work with SCL, was that taken by Chris Wylie? Did he effectively just say, "Can you come and help us with this piece of work?" and you were given a contract to do it or did you meet various people at SCL to establish that you were suitable?

Jeff Silvester: It was some time ago. He contacted me originally to talk about a project and get some advice. Through the conversation, I introduced him to Zack to talk a little bit about some of the online advertising possibilities and though we did not end up doing that, we did end up doing the work on the political CRM, the customer relationship management tool. I believe—and again, this is 2013, so it is some time ago—Zack went to London to meet with a couple of people during that time, but I do not know if he met Nix at that time. I can certainly find out.



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Q2775 **Chair:** But if it was not him, it would have been other SCL people?

Jeff Silvester: Not Chris Wylie or not Mr Nix you mean?

Chair: When you said Zack came to London and met a couple of people, you said it may not have been Alexander Nix, but would it have been other people from SCL to discuss that contract?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, correct.

Q2776 **Chair:** Then in 2014 AIQ worked with SCL on developing the Ripon tool; that is correct?

Jeff Silvester: Sort of. The Ripon tool has been described in a lot of different ways. The part that we have done was a political customer relationship management tool focused on the US market. This was software that again would help with people going door to door. There was a tool in there that you could do phone banking so that you could call people and get their opinions on things and keep track of all that sort of information. It was a tool not dissimilar from the same political CRMs that each of you have here, like the Conservatives have Votesource and previously Merlin, Contact Creator I think Labour has, and the Lib Dems have Connect, which interestingly is based on the NGP VAN out of the US. That is the same tool that the Canadian Liberal Party is using. It is a tool just like that, but custom-made for that audience.

Q2777 **Chair:** I have a copy of the contract between yourselves and SCL for that project and there is a third-party revenue share clause in that as well, where either company can be compensated for any future use of that tool if it is sold on and if it is licensed to third parties. Were there any third-party licensing arrangements put in place for that tool?

Jeff Silvester: I do not recall that specific part of that contract. I do not know if that contract you have is the same one that we signed, but if shared, I can certainly take a look.

Q2778 **Chair:** I will read it. Clause 3.1 says, "In the event either party enters into third-party arrangements utilising the product to generate revenue, the revenue shall be shared between AIQ and SCL".

Jeff Silvester: I do not have the benefit of seeing that to know if that is the contract, because I do not recall all the details, but to answer your question specifically, no, we never licensed it with anyone else and we do not know that they did either.

Q2779 **Chair:** You never received revenue from SCL relating to the development of this product or indeed paid money to SCL as a consequence of the development of this product?

Jeff Silvester: To the question, we have never paid money to SCL for it, no. They did pay us for the development of that software. The contract that we had for them was to write software that they would own.

Q2780 **Chair:** You are saying beyond the money you received to execute this



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contract and deliver the product, you have not received future payments from SCL because they have then taken that product and licensed it to other people?

Jeff Silvester: After 2014 we did some additional customisations to that software, the software development for it, leading up to the 2015 cycle. There are no external clients. The only work we did with respect to that was development work for that software, if that answers your question, because later in 2015, leading up to the 2016 primaries, we did do some additional software development on that software for SCL, but that again is just more development work, increasing the scope of what they wanted it to do and that sort of thing.

Q2781 **Chair:** Because this third-party revenue share clause, I think it would be a fairly standard thing in a contract like this, because what you are saying is, "We were paid for developing the product for what you say it is going to be used for, but after we have done it for you, if you then sell that on to other people, license it to other people and it has a much greater commercial application, then we should receive some compensation for that as well, because we are the people that developed it".

Jeff Silvester: I do not know about that particular section. I would have to go back and read it myself. We enter into different contracts with clients from time to time. In the case of the SCL contract that we signed, what I have seen, is the one that essentially says at the end of the development cycle, if they are happy with the product that we created for them and they pay us on time, then we transfer the code to them. Once we make that transfer, they can do whatever they want with it; they can use it however they like. That is fairly standard in software development.

Q2782 **Chair:** But basically, regardless of the contract itself, the issue is revenue derived from the work, so what you are saying is you were paid to develop the tool, you were paid to do effectively some more work on that product in 2014, and other than that, you have not been paid by SCL—

Jeff Silvester: In 2015. But yes, other than that, that is all the payments we received from SCL for that work.

Q2783 **Chair:** Obviously in 2016, we know that you did work on Vote Leave in the referendum campaign. During this period of time, you had several projects with SCL, we know as well that obviously you worked on Cambridge Analytica's work, I think it was, for the Bolton super PAC in 2014 as well. You were involved in the work they did on various different political campaigns that Ambassador Bolton's super PAC was supporting.

Jeff Silvester: In 2014?

Chair: 2014.

Jeff Silvester: In 2014, the work we did there was all part of that Ripon contract with SCL. We understood that SCL had some relationship with Cambridge Analytica, but our contract was with SCL at that time. Bolton



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PAC was one of the organisations that SCL had asked us to deploy that Ripon tool—that Ripon political CRM—for, so we deployed it on their servers and assisted with loading information into it for the client, yes.

Q2784 **Chair:** Yes, so in terms of your SCL work, you were hired to work in Trinidad; you were hired then to develop Ripon. You worked, as a consequence of developing Ripon, on the Bolton super PAC work and then in late 2014, it would seem for the 2015 cycle, as you said, you were involved in doing some further work on Ripon?

Jeff Silvester: On the Ripon tool, correct.

Q2785 **Chair:** Yes, exactly. During this time there is quite a lot of work obviously with SCL. Are you working with other clients as well?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. We have worked with all kinds of clients doing website development and online advertising. SCL at that time was certainly our largest client, our largest single client, but it was not our only client.

Q2786 **Chair:** Could you give us an idea of what your company's turnover was at that time?

Jeff Silvester: In terms of staff?

Chair: No, in terms of revenue.

Jeff Silvester: I do not have that right now. I could certainly try to find that for you and get it to you, but I do not have it in front of me right now.

Q2787 **Chair:** Yes. Rather than going to Companies House in British Columbia, if you were able to just send us the turnover figures for your company accounts.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I can send you some general figures when I get back to the office.

Q2788 **Chair:** Presumably you have to report accounts as a company?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, there is some reporting we have to do. I am happy to share that with you.

Q2789 **Chair:** Yes. I am not asking for secret commercial information, just the reported accounts.

Jeff Silvester: No, I understand, just general top-line numbers. Yes, I can see if I can find them for you.

Q2790 **Chair:** I know we are going to come on and talk about the referendum later on, but just in terms of the chronology of your company, you say in your written statement that you were introduced to Vote Leave by a mutual friend in April 2016. Is that right?



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Jeff Silvester: I think 31 March or 1 April, one or the other, but yes, it was at that time.

Q2791 **Chair:** Who was the person that made the introduction?

Jeff Silvester: We have not disclosed that now just in terms of his privacy, but I think he has come out for that. It was Mark Gettleson who introduced us.

Q2792 **Chair:** Who was the introduction to, to Dominic Cummings?

Jeff Silvester: No, to Henry de Zoete, who is the digital director.

Q2793 **Chair:** You had not had any contact with Vote Leave or people who worked for Vote Leave previous to that?

Jeff Silvester: Previous to that, no.

Q2794 **Chair:** Just one question on that before we move on to other colleagues' questions. You will have seen the Facebook letter they sent to the Electoral Commission. They say, "In total, AIQ ran 1,390 ads on behalf of the pages linked to the referendum campaign between February 2016 and 23 June inclusive". How were you running ads in February 2015 for Vote Leave if you had not met them until 31 March?

Jeff Silvester: I am only aware of us running ads on the first Friday following the announcement of the actual campaign. I know Vote Leave ran some ads previous to that, but I do not think we did anything with that.

Q2795 **Chair:** Obviously what Facebook can see is who the administrators are for the pages that are running the ads.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2796 **Chair:** They are not saying Vote Leave, they are saying in total AIQ ran those ads on behalf of these pages from February.

Jeff Silvester: I do not recall running any ads previous to that, because our first introduction to Henry was on, I think, 31 March or 1 April. I know we started running ads shortly after the 13th, it would have been, but that was the first time we ran ads, to my knowledge.

Q2797 **Chair:** You are saying that is the first time you met was on 31 March, but were you in contact remotely?

Jeff Silvester: No, not at all. No, the first introduction was at that time. I can get the exact date if it is important, but it is either 31 March or 1 April.

Q2798 **Chair:** This is an important point. If you are able to check that for us, maybe with Zack as well, and we will certainly ask Facebook just to confirm that is correct. Clearly what Facebook have put in their statement to the Electoral Commission, based on the work they have done looking at this, is obviously very different from your own position. I think we just



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need to establish what the truth is.

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I do not know what Facebook is looking at in order to make that assumption—or that assertion, rather—but I do know that we did not do anything until they launched, essentially. I do know that Vote Leave did run ads on their own through their page. When we run ads, we do it through the client, essentially, so we did run ads for them for their launch, but not previously. But again, I will double-check and look into that to make sure, but I have no records anywhere that we have spoken to them previous to that or did anything for them previously.

Q2799 **Chair:** It is a question of when did you have administration rights of the pages.

Jeff Silvester: I can try to find exactly when we got access to run ads on their page. I will see if I can get that data.

Q2800 **Julian Knight:** Thank you, Mr Silvester, for appearing before us today, it is greatly appreciated.

In your evidence you gave before the Canadian committee, you said essentially you do not hold data on individuals. Is that correct?

Jeff Silvester: Our practice is not to, yes.

Q2801 **Julian Knight:** Your practice is not to? Does that mean that you do or do not?

Jeff Silvester: It means that we have at times, but we do not keep that information.

Q2802 **Julian Knight:** Is that therefore the reason why when we asked Mr Vickery, who gave evidence before us, he said that AIQ was asked that very same question and he said that you were not quite fully straightforward in your answer to the Canadian committee? He says, "They may not have the large oceans but they have the residual ponds from them accessing it, such as I was able to locate my own information in a spreadsheet called Online Activists, which had been pulled and was available to AIQ". Effectively, who is telling the truth here? Is it yourself or is it Mr Vickery?

Jeff Silvester: What Mr Vickery is making reference to is, unauthorised, he gained access to our code repository. Our code repository is a server where we store backups and our working product of the software code that we write for our clients and for ourselves. We were alerted to that on 25 March by a journalist, so we quickly disabled access and secured that and other servers.

In our quick and initial investigation, we found that we had inadvertently backed up some client information into that repository. That client information was contact information or voter contact information from some of our clients. When we discovered that, we immediately contacted the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of British



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Columbia. We let them know and we followed up with them in the morning with a conversation. We subsequently reported to them more of our findings and our investigation into that is continuing. The information that was in there was not supposed to be in there. When we have access to information from clients, it is for the purposes of doing work for that client and at the end of that we delete that information. Information was deleted off the live systems when they were shut down. Unfortunately, when some code backups were made, it backed up some of the information in addition to the code, unbeknown to our developers.

Q2803 Julian Knight: You are saying that inadvertently it saved voter information?

Jeff Silvester: It was contact information for voters, yes.

Q2804 Julian Knight: Contact information for voters. It is not specifically client information, not like, for example, if I am your client, you would back up my name. Effectively it would be all those people—and potentially a huge number of people—I have information on that I come to you about in order basically for you to use that data. That is the information that has been inadvertently backed up, is that correct?

Jeff Silvester: Some of it, yes.

Q2805 Julian Knight: Exactly how much voter data was inadvertently backed up?

Jeff Silvester: I do not have the numbers right here in front of me, but we did share our initial findings with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of British Columbia; we have shared some with the ICO here.

Q2806 Julian Knight: Did they not ask you that question? They must have asked you that question, how much—

Jeff Silvester: We have sent that information to the BC—

Julian Knight: You know the number?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I do not have it with me here but I can happily get that for you.

Q2807 Julian Knight: When will you be able to let us have precisely the number of people who were involved in inadvertent backing up?

Jeff Silvester: As soon as I get back to my office, yes.

Q2808 Julian Knight: Thank you. Where is your data stored though for your company? Obviously this was inadvertently backed up, but how do you back up your data? Do you use, for example, Amazon Web Service?

Jeff Silvester: We do not hold a lot of data. When we create software for a client, and I will use a political customer relationship management tool as an example, it does have its own database. We will deploy those particular tools to the region using cloud services like Amazon where the



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customer is located. In the case of the United States, where we do most of our work, we will choose a state closest to the state where they are working, where we can get suitable servers, and then all the backups exist there within that location.

Q2809 **Julian Knight:** Basically if I was from North Carolina, for example, and I was your client, you would use a server from let's say South Carolina?

Jeff Silvester: If that was the closest server that we could get, yes. We try to find the servers closest to where they are. It is not always possible to get in the exact same state or the exact same country, but we make our best effort to do that.

Q2810 **Julian Knight:** Do you or have you stored data on GitLab?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. As you know, when we did some inadvertent backups of the information from some of the voters, it did end up on GitLab, yes.

Q2811 **Julian Knight:** That was the one that was inadvertently backed up on GitLab?

Jeff Silvester: That is what we have talked about, yes.

Q2812 **Julian Knight:** It is a 1.8 gigabyte file, I understand. Is that what you are referring to in terms of Calypso, I believe it is called? What is Calypso, basically?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know what Calypso is.

Q2813 **Julian Knight:** No idea at all, so this is not anything to do with the information that is stored on GitLab?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know that that is on GitLab. I have never heard the term. Well, I have heard the term Calypso, but not in relation to any work that we have done.

Q2814 **Julian Knight:** When have you heard this term?

Jeff Silvester: I mean, there are songs about it, like it is just a word. I am thinking of a John Denver song in particular, but in terms of work that we have done, to my recollection, I cannot think of any time when we have called a project Calypso or anything like that. If you have information there that you can share, I can take a look, but I do not—

Q2815 **Julian Knight:** This isn't effectively a large database that you have stored on GitLab, 1.8 gigabytes?

Jeff Silvester: Not to my knowledge, no.

Q2816 **Julian Knight:** Not at all. Would you know about that?

Jeff Silvester: I could certainly double-check to see if somebody has put something in there called Calypso. I would have to go and look at the data.



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Q2817 **Julian Knight:** A file of that size, just supposing there was a file existing of that particular size, that is really quite substantial in size, is it not?

Jeff Silvester: It depends what is in the file. 1.5 you said, or—

Julian Knight: 1.8.

Jeff Silvester: Oh, 1.8 gigabytes. Depending on the nature of the file, it could be a large file or a small file. If it is videos and stuff, it would be small; if it was information—

Q2818 **Julian Knight:** If it was voter information, it would be quite considerable?

Jeff Silvester: If it was voter information, it would be quite large.

Q2819 **Julian Knight:** When you say “quite large”, hundreds of thousands, potentially?

Jeff Silvester: Hundreds, potentially.

Q2820 **Julian Knight:** Just one other question as well. You told the Canadian committee that AggregateIQ is not a data analytics company, so what precisely do you do?

Jeff Silvester: We are an online advertising, software development and website development company. We work with clients around the world, but mostly in the United States, providing those services.

Q2821 **Julian Knight:** Online advertising and software development. To be involved with these particular campaigns globally from Trinidad and Tobago to Vote Leave, that does not sound like an overly-specialist sort of area. Effectively, it seems very odd that a company from where you are located will be so intrinsically involved in these particular elections.

Jeff Silvester: It is somewhat specialised in that we do focus in and around politics. There are lots of website development companies, there are lots of online advertising companies, there are lots of software development companies, but having those companies with some experience in the political side of things is more specialised. We are able to provide the work for the clients and understand what they are asking when they say, “We are trying to do some voter contact in this area”. That type of information and that type of knowledge and experience is helpful when you are developing software for that or a website or whatever it happens to be.

Q2822 **Julian Knight:** Your USP is not the fact that you have had access to this large ocean of data and have been able to draw off these models from that data and then basically you are able then to effectively sell those in the international political community? That is not your USP?

Jeff Silvester: No, we do not download and sell models or anything.

Q2823 **Julian Knight:** No, I am not saying you are selling specific information, but, for example, if you have had this data and then what you are doing,



you have created this working structure from that data, that is not your USP when it comes to it? It is based on the fact that you are very good at building these websites and you understand political speak when someone gets on the phone or sends an e-mail; is that just your USP?

Jeff Silvester: Let me be clear, we are not using data from any client for any other client. If we have had access to any model or anything like you have suggested, that is for that client and that client only. We do not retain that information; we do not use that information for anything. It is theirs. Our work is in the online advertising, software development and website development, particularly for politics, but also for community organisations, some companies, things like that. That is the work we do.

We are not data scientists, we are not a data analytics company. We do not model or do anything like this with data. If we have information from a client that they want us to use in providing services, like, for example, information about voters that you might get if you are a registered candidate or a political party, then we help them use that information how they want it to be used. But as you are saying, our expertise is in applying those technical sensibilities to the political space.

Q2824 Chair: On this area, you have talked a bit about your Monarch project when you gave evidence in the Canadian House of Commons. Can you explain a little bit about how Monarch works, how data is gathered to support the systems that Monarch runs?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. There are two parts to that project. One is a simple reporting tool that uses the Facebook API to just get information on the performance of ads. If we were running an advertisement for you, for example, you would be able to log in and see they ran 12 different ads, here was the popularity of each and here is how much was spent. That is what you can see there.

The other part of Monarch integrates with your website so that if somebody comes to your website and let's say you have a link on there to sign up for my mailing list and they put information, their name and e-mail address there and hit "submit", it makes sure that that gets into your database in a way that is marked so that you know it is an e-mail sign-up as opposed to somebody who is volunteering, as opposed to somebody who might be—I do not know—providing information because they want you to phone them later. It tracks that information and so what we track is how many people do each of those things, so then I could let you know, "We ran 12 ads. Five people who came to your website because of an ad, they signed up to your e-mail list, four people signed up to your get more information and another signed up to volunteer" or something like that. That is predominantly what those tools do.

Q2825 Chair: Predominantly. Does that include any data that is gathered from the site, so if we were using pixels, would Monarch record that data?



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Jeff Silvester: Monarch does use pixels in order to track that information, so it does temporarily store the anonymous browsing information on the individual and then we link that up. Because essentially a pixel is a tiny piece of code that lives on a web server, so that when you get to that web server, if you have clicked on a particular ad, you know that it was an ad that was clicked on, so that is how the person got there. It is a way that advertising companies use to track who comes to their website.

Q2826 **Chair:** But using pixels with Facebook helps you link that ad traffic, that site traffic back to Facebook users?

Jeff Silvester: Not to a Facebook user, no. It tells you that they have come from Facebook and which ad on Facebook it came to, if you put that tracking in place. When you advertise with Facebook, the information that Facebook provides back to you is all anonymous. If you run enough ads, you can generally see how many people are within certain demographic categories, so you could say people between 25 and 35 clicked more often than people between 45 and 55, but you do not get individual information or individual user information from Facebook at all.

Q2827 **Chair:** No, it would not name the user but it helps you contact that person again. You could run that back to the person that has been detected through pixels, even if you do not necessarily know the name of that person.

Jeff Silvester: That is a different kind of pixel called a retargeting pixel. A retargeting pixel on Facebook or Google, what it lets you do is if Facebook or Google detects someone who they think is that same person—you have asked them to show ads say to people that have been to my website, you can go on Facebook or Google, for example, and say, "I would like to show ads to people who have been on my website"—then if they see that person again, they will then show them the ad, but you do not get to see who those people are. You only know that X number of people came to your website and you would like to show ads to them again.

Q2828 **Chair:** This information that comes back to the Monarch system, you said it is gathering this information based on how people are interacting with some sites.

Jeff Silvester: The information that Monarch gathers is the general advertising information, so it would get the number of people who clicked on an ad and the number of people ads were shown to, but not the people themselves.

Q2829 **Chair:** That information, is that held in perpetuity within the system or is it destroyed after a period of time? What happens there?

Jeff Silvester: There are two. The information that we get, because of course people come to your website all the time and not all of it is related to ad traffic, so periodically, it is like a log file that as you go, it just



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cleans out a couple of days before, so you might have a couple of days' worth of information there that you has come into your website, so you can compare to see if it was an ad that drove them or not. But then we remove the information, and then as with all of our clients, at the end of our work with those clients, we delete all the information from that client.

Q2830 Chair: It was reported, I think after the referendum campaign, that you used an app called uCampaign during the referendum. Is that correct?

Jeff Silvester: The Vote Leave campaign did use uCampaign, yes, that is right.

Q2831 Chair: Were you involved in the deployment of that app?

Jeff Silvester: Not the deployment, but we certainly made the introduction and connected them and supported the relationship in that respect, yes. I did not do the physical technical deployment, but—

Q2832 Chair: But effectively uCampaign gathers the contacts out of someone's phone, doesn't it, if they use the app?

Jeff Silvester: The American version does. I understood that they changed this version for the UK to meet the UK rules with respect to data collection, as such.

Q2833 Chair: I am sure the Information Commissioner will want to check that they did do that.

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I was not involved in the technical element. I e-mailed them pictures, like for the icons. I was not involved in any of that.

Q2834 Chair: But if uCampaign works in exactly the same way or works in a similar way in the UK, that it is gathering and people sign up to it to use it as part of supporting a campaign, the idea is that all their friends, all their contacts that they have in their phone get told that their friend is going to vote one way in this referendum and is active in some way. Is the campaign also benefiting from that data, because you are then getting phone numbers, potentially e-mail contacts as well? Is that coming back to the campaign?

Jeff Silvester: I had some experience using the uCampaign app previously, but I understood that when it collects the information—and again, I do not have first-hand knowledge of that, only just what I observed—is that it used the information so that you can choose which friends you wanted to e-mail, so when you went to use that feature, like it would say, "Here are your friends. Do you want to e-mail them or send them an SMS?" or something like this. I do not remember exactly. That is not really my area of expertise, so I can't really speak to that, so I do not know if that information then comes to the campaign, in the American sense anyway, and I do not know from the UK perspective.

Q2835 Chair: But the app slightly gamifies the process as well. In some ways, it sort of rewards people for sharing their contacts.



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Jeff Silvester: I think you get points when that happens but, again, I do not know in the context of the UK. I did not use the one that was deployed for Vote Leave, so I do not know. I know in the American context that, yes, you get points when you do certain tasks, like sharing something with a friend or looking at a Facebook page and this type of thing, but I do not know what information it collects specifically and where that goes. That would really be a better question for them.

Q2836 **Chair:** Yes, but obviously what it does in effect is basically gathering personal contacts from people's phones to support the campaign by encouraging people to use the app—

Jeff Silvester: Certainly in theory it could. Whether that happened in the UK, I do not know, but in the US context, I know that is possible. It certainly can happen, they can do that, but I do not know if that is what they deployed for the UK.

Q2837 **Chair:** But it is interesting as well, because the uCampaign app was used in the referendum here, it was used in the Cruz campaign and it was used in the Trump campaign. That is correct, isn't it?

Jeff Silvester: I know it was used in the Cruz campaign. That is the experience that I had working with them. I think they might have worked with Trump, but I was not involved.

Q2838 **Chair:** It was reported at the time that they were.

Jeff Silvester: I trust what you are saying, yes.

Q2839 **Chair:** It is just a bit of a coincidence as well that SCL and Cambridge Analytica worked on the Cruz campaign, they worked on the Trump campaign, you guys worked on the referendum.

Jeff Silvester: With respect to the uCampaign, it is not a coincidence at all. I had experience helping when they deployed it for the Cruz campaign through my work there, so when the Vote Leave campaign was looking for an app, I suggested that one.

Q2840 **Chair:** You worked on the Cruz campaign?

Jeff Silvester: I worked with SCL on the Cruz campaign.

Q2841 **Chair:** That is another one. When we were talking earlier on, we did not cover off you working with SCL in 2016 on the Cruz campaign.

Jeff Silvester: That is what I mentioned, the primaries in 2015, correct.

Q2842 **Chair:** So when you mentioned the 2015 cycle, you were talking about the Republican primaries?

Jeff Silvester: Correct, the presidential primaries, yes.

Q2843 **Christian Matheson:** I just have a follow-up to Mr Knight's questions on this data repository, the code depository that we have talked about a little earlier. Can you just say again—I think you referred to it in the



answers—when and how you discovered that they had been left exposed?

Jeff Silvester: On 25 March, we were alerted by a journalist that there had been unauthorised access to our code repository. We immediately shut down the code repository and indeed secured all of our servers and all of our systems to make sure no further access was possible and we started an investigation right then. We did discover, as I said, that there had been some personal information from one of our clients previously that had been left in that repository and it was not supposed to have been there, as I said. That is when we contacted the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner in British Columbia to let them know about that.

Q2844 **Christian Matheson:** “Unauthorised access” sounds like hacking.

Jeff Silvester: Mr Vickery has described how he accessed the service. Our investigation is still ongoing into how he was able to do what he said he did. We are doing a very thorough investigation and it unfortunately takes quite a lot of time going through every log and every system and every backup, but we are continuing to do that. I cannot speak to the methods by which he accessed the repository, but it certainly was not authorised by us.

Q2845 **Christian Matheson:** What is happening with your investigations at the moment into this?

Jeff Silvester: As I said, we did find some additional information beyond the stuff that we first found in our first look at the systems, which we have reported to the Information Commissioner in British Columbia and to the UKICO. We are following up on that with both of them. We are still looking into how the access was obtained and the whole circumstance behind that. We also are going through every log file. So far all we have found is that Mr Vickery and the journalist were the only ones that had accessed that system aside from our staff, but we want to be 100% certain of that. We are going through every log file and checking all of that to make sure.

Q2846 **Christian Matheson:** When do you think that inquiry is going to finish?

Jeff Silvester: I do not want to prejudge.

Q2847 **Christian Matheson:** Give us a rough idea: June, July, August?

Jeff Silvester: I would say within the next month or two, yes.

Q2848 **Christian Matheson:** Do you feel a sense perhaps of gratitude to Mr Vickery for demonstrating that some of this data was exposed?

Jeff Silvester: I think my gratitude is more to the journalist who reported it to us before reporting it anywhere else. In his statement, Mr Vickery said that normally when he finds these things he notifies the company right away. In this case, he notified the journalist first, so I do have a lot of gratitude to the journalist for letting us know before reporting it. We have not spoken directly with Mr Vickery but we have



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sent letters via our lawyers to his lawyers to get confirmation that he will not share that information with anyone outside of the relevant legal authorities. Certainly I appreciate him not doing that, because of course, as you know—as I have mentioned—there was some personal information in there that should not have been there. In the interests of protecting people's personal information, we are glad that he has agreed not to share it with any one.

Q2849 **Christian Matheson:** "Some personal information that should not have been there." What exactly does that mean?

Jeff Silvester: As I described earlier to Mr Knight, it was some contact information on individual voters from some of the clients that we have had previously.

Q2850 **Christian Matheson:** Including clients in the USA?

Jeff Silvester: In the USA predominantly, yes.

Q2851 **Christian Matheson:** Have you not stepped over a line there, because obviously you are a Canadian company and the data is being kept in Canada, but this is data of American people, which could be useful for an American election?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know where the exact server location is for that code repository. I think it is in the United States though for that particular repository. I would have to get that information for you.

Q2852 **Christian Matheson:** But if the server location was not in the USA, might you be in trouble?

Jeff Silvester: I do not believe so, no.

Q2853 **Christian Matheson:** No. There is a cynical view—I am not suggesting I share it, I am just going to chuck it in there—that the reason that the data and the code was left unsecured was so that people that you would approve of would gain access to it, but there would not have to be a physical transfer that could be audited or followed, there would not have to be a data transfer. You would just give somebody the nod, "This is where you will find the data, this is where you will find the code" and they access it that way, so a different organisation can access the same code and dataset. Do you think that is fair or is it only a cynical assessment?

Jeff Silvester: No. The information that we store in our repository is, like I said, predominantly code about the work that we are doing for our clients. Anyone getting access to that code certainly has the potential risk of giving people access to our client's proprietary information, so we would never want that information to get out. With respect to the personal information that was inadvertently stored there, that would be an incredibly inefficient way to do what you are suggesting, from a simple perspective, but moreover, we log everything. We would definitely be able to go back and look at who had accessed that.



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Q2854 **Christian Matheson:** It would be inefficient but it would also be efficient in terms of covering your tracks.

Jeff Silvester: I totally disagree.

Q2855 **Christian Matheson:** Why?

Jeff Silvester: Right now we are spending—

Christian Matheson: You are the expert and I am not. Tell me why I am wrong.

Jeff Silvester: Right now we are spending quite a good deal of time looking into exactly who accessed that information, so all of that will be available. We can see that Mr Vickery and the journalist did access that information. The journalist did not download it though.

Q2856 **Christian Matheson:** Yes, but you are only looking at it because Mr Vickery and the journalist found it and told you it was publicly available. If they had not done so, then you would not have needed to do the audit. If the cynical suggestion that I am suggesting was the case, then nobody would have known about it, other than the people that your company had suggested.

Jeff Silvester: That is certainly not how we conduct the business and that is not what we do. As I said, the personal information that was in there, I should say, was basic contact information. I do not know how that could help anyone, but at the same point it was not supposed to be there. I think I mentioned—maybe I did not—we have put processes into place now to ensure that that does not happen, including additional audits on a regular basis. Now, even on projects that we are no longer working on—and this was one of the early findings—we still go back and audit those GitLab repositories to make sure that there is nothing there that should not be there.

Q2857 **Christian Matheson:** Did Mr Vickery hack GitLab?

Jeff Silvester: I do not want to describe it that way.

Q2858 **Christian Matheson:** Did he gain access to it?

Jeff Silvester: He certainly gained access to a portion of our GitLab, yes.

Q2859 **Christian Matheson:** Did the journalist gain access to it?

Jeff Silvester: Yes.

Q2860 **Christian Matheson:** Did you see that the journalist had gained access to it from your auditing?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, we did.

Q2861 **Christian Matheson:** Presumably, they both accept that anyway, that they did?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.



Q2862 **Ian C. Lucas:** Does GitLab belong to AIQ?

Jeff Silvester: The GitLab installation. When you use GitLab, it is a tool that anyone can use and use for their own development. We do not own the code for GitLab, but we have a licence to use one version of it for our development. Does that make sense?

Q2863 **Ian C. Lucas:** There are parts of GitLab that are exclusively yours?

Jeff Silvester: There was information on that server that is exclusively ours, yes.

Q2864 **Ian C. Lucas:** That is what was accessed by Mr Vickery?

Jeff Silvester: He accessed a couple of things on that server. He accessed code, both some code that is our client code and some code that is our own, and he accessed some contact information from voters, again that came from our clients.

Q2865 **Ian C. Lucas:** Can I read you something in your statement that you sent to us? You said, "At the end of our engagement with a client or at any time before that when any information is no longer required, we return the information to our client and destroy it from our systems".

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2866 **Ian C. Lucas:** I am puzzled because I do not understand why the information on GitLab that was accessed by Mr Vickery had not been destroyed.

Jeff Silvester: It is a very good question because, as I said, that information was not supposed to be there.

Q2867 **Ian C. Lucas:** So what is the answer to the question? Why was it still there?

Jeff Silvester: That is what I was just about to explain. The information that was on there was information that during the process of changing code for a server or for a client—when we do that oftentimes the developers do not just go straight on to the server and update the code because there are all kinds of risks associated with that. What they will do is they will make sure they have the latest version of that code. They will set up a test server or a development server, which looks just like the other server but without the data, and then they make the changes, test it out, make sure it is going to work. Then when they are ready they use GitLab to transfer that new code on to that server that is functioning for the client.

As part of that process before they do that deploy, they will oftentimes make a backup of that server before they deploy the code, just as an extra step. But in that, if they then discover quickly that they need to make another quick change, sometimes they do that directly on that server. They are like, for example, "Oh, I forgot to change the domain". I apologise that this is a little bit technical, but when they do the



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development on a test server, it might be called "test.yourdomain.com" but when you move that over to deploy for the production, it has to be called "production.yourdomain.com". If they forgot to make that change, they might make that quickly on the server.

They then will back up that code and this is how some of these happen. They then back up that code again to GitLab but because they had made a backup of the whole system on that server before they deployed their code, that might include personal information like we saw, the contact information that ended in our repository. The developers did not know that they were backing up that information when they did it. They thought they were just backing up code. They had backed up the information from the server. Again, I apologise, it is rather technical, but essentially the developers when doing the backup—and it is not in all of the cases and all of the things we have done but in a few of them that is—

Q2868 Ian C. Lucas: The thing is, Mr Silvester, you are right, it is technical and you have well and truly lost me.

Jeff Silvester: I am sorry.

Q2869 Ian C. Lucas: You are the expert and the situation is that that should not have happened.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2870 Ian C. Lucas: How long was the information there for? It is 2018 now and this was flagged up to you in March.

Jeff Silvester: I believe the latest information was from 2017 but I would have to confirm that. I will happily look to see what the last date of any information being on there was.

Q2871 Ian C. Lucas: It is a pretty important question, isn't it? You have been operating since November 2013 as a business?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2872 Ian C. Lucas: Have you been using GitLab since then?

Jeff Silvester: We have used different implementations of Git and GitLab but there was code on there from stuff as far back as 2013, correct, and there was actually information from as far back as 2013.

Q2873 Ian C. Lucas: You have been involved in the referendum campaign. You have been involved in earlier elections in different places.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2874 Ian C. Lucas: All of that information is on GitLab?

Jeff Silvester: No. There is information from a limited number of clients on there. Where we did some of that—



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Q2875 **Ian C. Lucas:** Is there information from SCL there?

Jeff Silvester: There was information that SCL provided to us for campaigns, yes, but there was no information from during the Brexit campaign.

Q2876 **Ian C. Lucas:** There is no information from during the Brexit campaign?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Ian C. Lucas: Can you just give me a moment?

Jeff Silvester: Please.

Jo Stevens: Can I ask one question while you are doing that?

Chair: Yes.

Q2877 **Jo Stevens:** You have explained now what you are doing in terms of audits, but why were you not doing that before?

Jeff Silvester: What we would audit previously was the products we were working on and we did not go back and audit the ones that we had worked on previously. That is a failing on our part. We should have been going back in time and looking previously when really the audits would only happen for the ones we were working on. That is one of the initial findings of our investigation.

Q2878 **Jo Stevens:** It concerns me, and I am sure it concerns the Committee, that in your written evidence to us you have said—and Mr Lucas quoted the passage from your evidence—that you destroy information from your systems and you return it to your client. You have said that in your statement knowing, in fact, that your company did not do that.

Jeff Silvester: That is our process. We destroy the information on the systems that we create for them. For example, if we deployed a political customer relationship management tool for you and you had gone around and talked to your constituents and maybe kept track of who said they would support you and who did not, at the end of the campaign we ensure that if you retain that information that you have that and then we destroy the data and shut down that server. Then we do not keep any of that. The information, though, that unfortunately was backed up in our Git repository was not supposed to be backed up there.

Q2879 **Jo Stevens:** I know, but what I am saying is in your statement you say that you destroy it and/or return it to the client, but in fact you did not. Your evidence is contradictory.

Jeff Silvester: I was trying to perhaps describe what our practice is, and I fully admitted and have been completely open about the mistakes that we have made. That was a mistake. It was not supposed to have been backed up, though it was, and that is why we have already put into place measures to prevent that from happening again. I have apologised previously and I would apologise again to anyone who is affected.



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Q2880 **Jo Stevens:** You said that you could tell that Mr Vickery had accessed the information on GitLab and you could tell that the journalist had accessed it?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2881 **Jo Stevens:** Has anybody else accessed it?

Jeff Silvester: Like I said, our investigation is ongoing, but so far we have only seen access from our staff and from those individuals with relation to that information.

Q2882 **Ian C. Lucas:** Thank you very much for that and thanks to Jo for her help. I am just going to hand you a list of GitLab files that I have highlighted. The reason I was a bit taken aback—

Jeff Silvester: This is the highlighted section you mean?

Q2883 **Ian C. Lucas:** Yes. I think I started highlighting at “Change Britain”.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Ian C. Lucas: “Sitemaster, Wordpress site, client Brexit, My Polling Station, Master”. This is a Vote Leave website for finding a polling station. Note it says “client” and the name, “Vote Leave, Client Brexit, SyncMaster”. Those are all Brexit files on GitLab?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2884 **Ian C. Lucas:** You said there weren’t any?

Jeff Silvester: But that is code. As I said, predominantly our repository holds information on the code that we write for our clients. Sometimes it has pictures and things like that from websites, but the vast majority of the information in there is software code. We do have software code from some of the work we did on Brexit, but we have not found any personal information from that time.

Q2885 **Ian C. Lucas:** None of these will contain personal information relating to Brexit?

Jeff Silvester: So far our investigation has not found any Brexit information.

Q2886 **Ian C. Lucas:** Have you investigated these particular files?

Jeff Silvester: I have had my staff go through all of the files and report them to me and I have not seen anything yet. If there are additional files we have missed, it is theoretically possible, but so far they have done a very comprehensive job of doing that. Now, here’s the thing. As our investigation goes on, if we do find any additional information I will happily share that with you. When we conclude our investigation I am happy to report all the findings to you as well.

Q2887 **Ian C. Lucas:** You are a Canadian company. You have information



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relating to the referendum in the UK, which is continuing to be stored in this GitLab repository. Another person, a third party, has gained access to it. That causes me great concern about your ability to protect data belonging to my constituents.

Jeff Silvester: Like I said, I have not seen anything in there and I am not aware of any Brexit data being in there, but in general it certainly is a concern. It is a concern that it was able to happen and it is a concern that the information was in there in the first place. Again, it should not have been and we certainly made mistakes in allowing that to happen. We are working hard to correct that. We are working with the Canadian authorities in the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia and, indeed, with the UK ICO here and reporting information to them as well. I will be following up with both of them as this goes on and those are the relevant authorities to deal with this particular situation.

Ian C. Lucas: Okay, I have finished with that bit.

Q2888 **Chair:** With regard to the ICO, you have spoken a bit about this. This was of interest when you gave evidence to the Canadian Parliament. I have spoken with the ICO again today. They have said, for the record, that your company has responded to letters. I understand there is a discussion about whether you will meet with them while you are in London; I hope you do. They said they have not received any information from you directly in response to their questions. There has been nothing, no documents, no data. Nothing that they have requested has been delivered to them. There has been contact and correspondence but no information shared, and the only information they have been able to gather so far to support their investigation has come to them from third parties and not from you.

I would ask you: could you just confirm for the Committee—and the ICO is here in the room as well—what you have given to them? You have referred several times now to information that you have shared with the ICO. What have you directly given to the ICO?

Jeff Silvester: They sent us a letter on 17 May 2017 and we responded to their letter with a letter. The whole content was the letter. Then again on 30 January 2018 they sent us a letter and we responded with a letter. After that, we communicated. I do not have the exact dates but we sent them another letter and then immediately following the appearance at the Canadian Parliament we sent another letter specifically to ask why they had mentioned that they believed we were not co-operating. We have subsequently had quite a lot of back and forth on e-mail. It is certainly our intention to co-operate as best as we can. We have had quite a number of e-mails go back and forth now and, indeed, we are meeting with some of their officials after this meeting.

Q2889 **Chair:** Yes. You can engage in correspondence with someone about questions you want them to answer without them answering the questions. That seems to be the case. They have contacted you saying,



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"We want information about things that are relevant to our investigation". You can respond to their letters and you can say, "We are in contact, we are co-operating" but you are not actually co-operating because you are not giving them what they are asking for.

Jeff Silvester: We do have restrictions with respect to what we are able to provide because of confidentiality with our individual clients, and we are clear about that with them. If we cannot give them something, we have been clear. I can only answer the questions as best as I can. When we reached out after the Committee meeting and they responded, we invited them again to send any additional questions they felt we had not answered and they have sent those to us. We are going to go through and make sure that we address those individually and provide that information to them. We are going to do our best to get them all the answers and information they need, but again we do have confidentiality obligations we have to balance.

Q2890 Chair: This is the UK Information Commissioner seeking information relevant to an investigation they are running about use of data in a referendum election in the UK, so their jurisdictional power is absolute. Today and on previous occasions I think you have sought to confuse us by saying that responding to letters is the same as answering questions, and that is what seems to have been lacking. What you have said today is you are going to answer their questions and you are going to meet with the Information Commissioner while you are in London, so I am pleased to hear that. It is also the case you wrote to the Information Commissioner telling her to back off and you thought the investigation was damaging your company, isn't that correct?

Jeff Silvester: I am happy to provide all of that correspondence to the Committee confidentially.

Chair: I would be grateful for that.

Jeff Silvester: Once I get back to the office I will send that to you. In one of the letters we did state that we thought that the commissioner's comments were not appropriate that she had made to the press and that her comments had been damaging. That is true. Subsequently, we did say that we thought that the matter was closed because we believed that we had answered all their questions substantively.

It is clear once we got to the Canadian commissioner and I believe you had sent an SMS or a text to one of the Members of Parliament to say that the commissioner had told you that we had not been co-operating or she was not happy with our answers, whichever it was—and I have not seen that SMS—that is why we reached out to them right after to clarify. Aside from those two letters and our two responses, we had no letters from them saying what you told us or through the Committee in an SMS. I would hope that rather than communicate through you or through the media that if they had additional questions they would just let us know or



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if we have not answered something to their satisfaction they would just let us know and we will happily respond.

Q2891 **Chair:** I watched the session in the Canadian House of Commons and I contacted a member of the committee, Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, who had asked you about this, because your answer to the question was that you were co-operating with the investigation, which was not the case.

Jeff Silvester: We believed we were.

Q2892 **Chair:** If you have been asked a series of questions and asked to supply information and then you do not do it, how would you consider that to be complying with the requests that had been made and co-operating with the investigation?

Jeff Silvester: As I said, I will happily provide you all the correspondence so you can take a look for yourself, but we answered the questions as best as we could subject to the confidentiality obligations we have.

Q2893 **Chair:** That amounted, though, to you saying, "We cannot answer these questions".

Jeff Silvester: There are some questions that we could only answer partially and we let them know which those were and the circumstances by which we could answer them more fully.

Q2894 **Chair:** Okay, but then did you actually answer them at all? You said there were questions that you could partially answer, but did you go ahead and then partially answer them?

Jeff Silvester: In their second letter on 30 January they asked us some more specifics about specific clients for which they satisfied the conditions by which we could provide the information, so we provided the information they asked for. If they have follow-ups on that letter from 30 January, which they have sent to us subsequently and I am working on responding to, we will respond.

Q2895 **Chair:** As I said earlier on, the Information Commissioner has been pretty clear that they have not received information directly from you. I think the best way of clearing this up would be if you would share the correspondence with the Information Commissioner with the Committee and then that will establish it once and for all.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I will do that, but I think what is more appropriate is additionally I said we are meeting with a few of their folks right after the meeting with you here today. What I am seeking to do is establish better, more clear and direct communication with them so that they can get the information they need and we can provide that in the most efficient way.

Chair: That is all anyone has been asking for.

Jeff Silvester: That is all we want.



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Q2896 **Brendan O'Hara:** Many witnesses, including Chris Vickery and Christopher Wylie, have described how file systems can be created that have no real owners, not a single owner, they just exist in cyberspace. Or they have described where perhaps one owner or one entity may own a file system that many other parties can access via cloud or other networks. Is that a system that you recognise?

Jeff Silvester: Insofar as you can create a file system on a server on the internet and you could copy that server, that is accurate. Does that address your question?

Q2897 **Brendan O'Hara:** As I say, what witnesses including Messrs Vickery and Wylie have been saying is that it can be convenient for a file system to be created of which there is either no single owner or there is one owner who then leaves or gives open access to others to access a file system. Is that a system that you recognise?

Jeff Silvester: There are systems like that that exist around the world. If you look at a webpage like Wikipedia, there is certainly an owner of that webpage but people can go on and register and make updates to Wikipedia, for example, and that updates their database with the record. With respect to the work that we do, the systems that we set up for our clients are just for that client. We do not share them with anyone else.

Q2898 **Brendan O'Hara:** Have you ever or do you operate a system like that at any level at the moment?

Jeff Silvester: Some of the systems that we make for our clients are for them in turn to work with their clients. Insofar as our client might allow one of their clients to access their system, that does happen, but insofar as anonymous users or users outside of those direct relationships, no.

Q2899 **Brendan O'Hara:** Can you see the advantage of creating a system that perhaps has no overall owner but which a number of individuals or companies can access the data therein?

Jeff Silvester: With any server you always have an owner because a server, whether it be on Amazon or Google or Microsoft, someone owns that server and they are responsible for it. They can allow other people to use that server. I cannot think of an instance in terms of the work that we do where that would be helpful or useful in any way.

Q2900 **Brendan O'Hara:** I think it was described to this Committee by a number of witnesses as almost a franchise model where groups of people who work towards a common interest but wish to remain legally separate from each other can access the same dataset without any one of them owning that dataset. Is that more accurate?

Jeff Silvester: That is not what we do, but is it theoretically possible? I suppose. That is not the type of work that we engage in.

Q2901 **Brendan O'Hara:** Can you see how that would be advantageous if companies wanted to remain legally separate from each other while being



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able to access and share the same dataset?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know from a legal perspective if that is advantageous or not. I can really only speak to what we do.

Q2902 **Brendan O'Hara:** Has AIQ never worked like that?

Jeff Silvester: We have worked with client data in the past where a client provides information, for example, for their website or for a political customer relationship management tool or this sort of thing. They at times do give us access to their systems to do that, but that is not a shared ownership or trying to hide anything. That is a fairly open contractual arrangement.

As I said, we have made systems for clients that allow their clients to access those systems, but then again they are creating very specific user names and passwords and that sort of thing for an individual client. I do not know if that answers your question, but I do not want to say that we have never let anyone else access a system because, like I said, with respect to some client work we have but with respect to sharing data among different companies we have received information from different companies. We have given back that information to companies when we are done with it, but we do not actively share it among groups of companies, if that answers your question.

Q2903 **Brendan O'Hara:** I am just trying to picture the model that may exist between AIQ, Cambridge Analytica and the SCL Group. I wondered if that would be the model that you all shared the same access to the same data, none of you actually own the dataset but you all have an interest in what is going on there.

Jeff Silvester: We have never had any shared data model with SCL or Cambridge Analytica or anyone for that matter. We do not do data analytics. I do not know if I mentioned in my statement but we did do some work for SCL, as I said, during 2014 and 2015, right up to the beginning of 2016, that involved the political CRM. SCL did provide to us during that time information like voter contact information, and I think we have referenced it earlier when talking about the GitLab repository. They did provide some voter contact information at that time, but that is not shared data so much as us fulfilling the goals of the work with the contract work we are doing for them.

Q2904 **Brendan O'Hara:** I am just trying to understand the nature of the relationship between the three companies. It has been described to us that the walls between AggregateIQ, Cambridge Analytica and SCL Group are porous. Would you agree with that analysis?

Jeff Silvester: No. AggregateIQ is a completely separate company. We have no common directors, no common employees, no common owners. AggregateIQ is entirely its own company. We are 100% Canadian owned and operated. Zach and I are the only directors and we make all the decisions for the company. SCL and Cambridge Analytica are their own



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companies. I have done contract work through SCL, but we have no other legal or corporate connection to them in any other way other than the contract work that we have done for them.

Q2905 Brendan O'Hara: You have as much in common with SCL Group as you have with Marks and Spencer?

Jeff Silvester: Well, I have never done any contract work for Marks and Spencer.

Q2906 Brendan O'Hara: You really are that separate? As a legal entity, you are that separate from SCL Group?

Jeff Silvester: As a legal entity, we are entirely separate from SCL, Cambridge Analytica, anyone involved with SCL or Cambridge Analytica. We are our own company. There are two directors of our company, myself and Zach. We are 100% Canadian owned and operated and we have never been corporately or otherwise obliged to them in any way.

Q2907 Brendan O'Hara: Wasn't it the case that SCL advertised you or boasted that you were SCL Canada?

Jeff Silvester: In 2017 we got a media enquiry about just that and they let us know that Zach's cell phone number was listed on SCL's website as having been under the heading "SCL Canada". We let the journalist know at the time that we did not know why they had done that. The journalist contacted SCL and SCL admitted that it should not have been there. I can provide that article to you if you like.

Now, in 2014 SCL did ask us to create SCL Canada but we declined. I do not know why they then went and put that information on their website because it is not an accurate representation. It certainly was not authorised. We did not know and if we had we would have asked them to take it down before.

Q2908 Brendan O'Hara: We seem to hear so often in this Committee that things that appear on websites for one company or another, when they are exposed they say, "Oh, well, that was just a lie" or, "That was just a marketing tool" or, "That was just a mistake". There just seems to be layer upon layer of lies, misunderstandings and honest mistakes. You can understand my scepticism that here we are again with SCL Group and another so-called honest mistake being made?

Jeff Silvester: I cannot speak for SCL or anyone there. However, there is a lot of speculation. There is a lot of misinformation. That is why I have come here. I believe I said this to the Canadian Parliament as well. I came here on my own time to share with you the facts, not speculation and not assumptions but fact. The fact is we have been a completely separate company the whole time. I have been open, we did do some work for SCL for a period of time, but we are not part of their company.

Q2909 Brendan O'Hara: We have been told by witnesses that the walls between your company, Cambridge Analytica and SCL Group are porous.



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We have heard from the Canadian committee evidence that you see AIQ as being a division of a larger entity, a development department within a large corporation. Is that true and who would be the large corporation that was being referred to?

Jeff Silvester: I believe that Ms Kaiser in her statement to you said something about us working closely with SCL. As I have said, we did do some contract work for SCL but with any client, whether it was SCL or during our time working with Vote Leave, we do work closely with our clients to deliver the services that they have asked us to provide. AggregateIQ has demonstrated time and time again that we are wholly Canadian owned. There are two directors, myself and Zach. We have no corporate ties otherwise other than the fact we did some contract work with SCL. We have no corporate ties to either SCL or Cambridge Analytica or any other company for that matter.

Q2910 **Brendan O'Hara:** What is your relationship with Robert Mercer?

Jeff Silvester: I have no relationship with Robert Mercer. I have never met Robert Mercer.

Q2911 **Brendan O'Hara:** Does your company have any relationship with Robert Mercer?

Jeff Silvester: Never.

Q2912 **Brendan O'Hara:** None whatsoever?

Jeff Silvester: None whatsoever.

Q2913 **Brendan O'Hara:** When you were in front of the Canadian committee, you were asked had there been data transfer between Cambridge Analytica and AIQ and you replied, "I don't think so". Can you confirm now has there been data transfer between Cambridge Analytica and AIQ?

Jeff Silvester: As I believe I mentioned then, we were working with SCL and we understood that SCL had a relationship with Cambridge Analytica. When SCL transferred us information, I do not know if the information was generated solely by SCL or if it had some connection in any way to Cambridge Analytica. I just know we received it from SCL, and that is why I do not know and I cannot tell that today. We have not spoken with anyone from SCL since 2016 so I do not know.

Q2914 **Brendan O'Hara:** Has there been a transfer between Cambridge Analytica and AIQ or has there been data transfer between SCL and AIQ?

Jeff Silvester: SCL has definitely given us information, yes.

Q2915 **Brendan O'Hara:** SCL has transferred data to you. Have you transferred data with SCL?

Jeff Silvester: To SCL you mean?

Brendan O'Hara: To SCL?



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Jeff Silvester: No. The only information that we had from SCL was that voter contact information as I mentioned earlier. To my recollection, I have not found anything in my investigations for the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia. I have not seen any other information about that in any way. I do know, as I said, that there was information transferred with respect to those SCL clients in 2014 and in 2015.

Q2916 **Brendan O'Hara:** I have a couple of last questions. What is the database of truth?

Jeff Silvester: The database of truth comment is a comment in part of our GitLab repository. There is a project we are working on for one of our clients and that particular note is a comment from one of our developers. Again, it is a bit technical, but what it refers to is a relationship in terms of which piece of information is more correct. If you, for example, have a phone number and then you have another system that has that same phone number, if it gets changed in one system and another one gets changed in another system, how do you know which phone number is correct? It refers to a sort of parent/child relationship with respect to correctness of information for that client system. That is not our own system, that is a system we are working on for a client of ours.

Q2917 **Brendan O'Hara:** Do you have access to data held by the Republican National Committee?

Jeff Silvester: We have had access to that information in the past.

Q2918 **Brendan O'Hara:** Is that the database of truth?

Jeff Silvester: The database of truth is not a finished product. It is something we are still working on even today, but it is part of that broader project and it does involve information from the RNC, yes.

Q2919 **Brendan O'Hara:** You are building the database of truth for the Republican National Committee?

Jeff Silvester: No. We have a client who does work and at times works with the Republican National Committee. The tool we are making is simply their tool to communicate effectively back and forth with the Republican National Committee.

Q2920 **Chair:** Just to clarify a couple of things, you said there that you were given data by SCL as opposed to Cambridge Analytica?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2921 **Chair:** As you know, what Facebook has confirmed is they have found a number—I think five—of custom audiences where they said there is an 80% overlap in terms of common members of audiences that have been used in campaigns that have been run by both SCL/Cambridge Analytica and by AIQ. Does that correlate to your understanding?



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Jeff Silvester: In terms of the exact numbers, I briefly saw the thing just before I came in, but we did do some online advertising for SCL so it would not surprise me if advertising we did on their behalf included information from voters that they wanted to run ads to.

Q2922 **Chair:** Were these custom audiences that were given to you by SCL to help you target advertising in the political work you mentioned in 2014 and 2015?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know the specifics of which audiences those are or which client we were doing that for because I do not have access to that Facebook account right now, but during the presidential primaries we did do advertising and we did do specific audiences with names and e-mail addresses. It is very possible and likely that that information came in, but whether it came directly from the campaign or from SCL I do not know the answer to that. All of the direction that we received during the presidential primary, as an example, came directly from the campaign. If the campaign asked us to run ads to a particular group of people, they would give us that information and then we would run the ads. I do not want to misspeak. It is entirely possible that SCL gave it directly to us, it is entirely possible the client gave it to us, but it was still that same data that SCL had.

Q2923 **Chair:** To be clear, these are datasets that have been created, probably using the tool that you have built for them, using Ripon?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2924 **Chair:** You have built the software for Ripon. The campaign or SCL are feeding datasets into Ripon and then that is helping to produce the custom audiences, which you then take back and help to improve the targeting of the ads on Facebook and other places, too?

Jeff Silvester: Basically, but the only thing I would add there, though, is that the information that was fed into Ripon once the campaign started was the typical type: who has been contacted and said they would support the campaign and this sort of thing. Some of those audiences might have been things like, "Let's show ads to anybody who we have previously spoken to to remind them about our campaign". I do not know the specific details about which campaigns it was. We did online advertising for SCL starting in late 2014—I do not have the exact date but I could find it for you if it is important—and that went through to early 2016, I think January perhaps. Again, I could double check that.

Q2925 **Chair:** Just on those campaigns, Aleksandr Kogan is supplying information to go into the system to help targeting of those adverts and there are e-mails you are copied on that Aleksandr Kogan is copied on as well. This is particularly for the work for Ambassador Bolton and the Super PAC where there are races in certain states and there is a desire to get more data from Kogan into the system to improve the targeting. That is correct, isn't it?



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Jeff Silvester: There are two things. One was the information that we understand now through the media that Mr Kogan downloaded from Facebook. We have never had access to any of that information. We have never seen that information.

Chair: I did not ask that question.

Jeff Silvester: Okay. The second part of that, your reference to the Bolton PAC, we were working with SCL at that time and Bolton was one of their clients. I believe the e-mail you are referring to was one that was about the specific information for the Bolton campaign. The reference there was to some work that I understood Mr Kogan was doing to validate particular issues on behalf of Bolton that were important, and those were national security type issues, but all of the surveys and everything were typical surveys done through a tool called Qualtrics. That was not through Facebook at all. I do not believe Mr Kogan was actually on that e-mail chain, but I could be incorrect.

Q2926 **Chair:** There are e-mails, though, that he is on and it was discussed.

Jeff Silvester: I do not recall ever communicating directly with him because we have never spoken or anything of that nature. Whether he was copied on an e-mail that I was on is possible, but we have never had access to even that direct data.

Q2927 **Chair:** Do you know, though, that you never received data that had been either a result of Dr Kogan's work with the My Digital Life app or information that had been derived from that? Do you know that you never received that?

Jeff Silvester: If you are speaking about the raw data, we know we have not. If you are speaking about data derivatives, it is theoretically possible. I do not know. All the information that we received looked like basic voter contact information. If they had grouped it in a way and said, "Here is a group" but unbeknown to us it was based on some of the work they had done, it is theoretically possible. I do not know.

Q2928 **Chair:** You cannot have it both ways. You are either the data analyst combining all these datasets to create the tool or what you said to us was you do not do that, you create the tools that can run all that data.

Jeff Silvester: The tools that we created, and I want to be completely clear, the Ripon tool, the political customer relationship management tool, did have some of SCL's personality scoring in it, but we do not know the datasets they used in order to arrive at that. We understood that they were doing this data analytics project about that, but when they gave us the information it has five spots for a digit that is between zero and one that represented one of those rankings or scores. We do not see the raw data or anything like that, but what we got was a voter file with that information in it.



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It had other information like if they were likely to vote, and that is based on a percentage chance depending on their voting record in the US, which is somewhat public. All of that information, where they derived their information, so from a derivatives perspective, it is theoretically possible but I do not know it to be true.

Q2929 **Chair:** I think it is useful to clarify this because again there has been—not just from your evidence—consistently through this inquiry people giving very definitive denials about things but in a very careful way. It might be quite true to say you do not have access, you never had access to the raw data that Dr Kogan hacked from Facebook—

Jeff Silvester: That is true.

Chair: —but you could easily have used data that had been derived from that work?

Jeff Silvester: It is theoretically possible but the purposes for which we used it, we did not do any personality—

Q2930 **Chair:** No, you did not, but effectively you designed the software to help create the audiences. You have been given audiences at the end of it to run out, to help runouts. Those audiences will be already separated out. They will be different audience groups?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, correct.

Q2931 **Chair:** There could be psychological profiling, Facebook data, all sorts of stuff could be in there. You do not particularly know that, so you could well be handling datasets that are based on Dr Kogan's work. Given the companies involved, it would seem pretty likely that that would be the case.

Jeff Silvester: Like I said, it is entirely possible. It is entirely possible, but again I do not know it to be true. It is theoretically possible, though, yes.

Q2932 **Ian C. Lucas:** Can I go back to the formation of AIQ? I think you said in your evidence that the company was incorporated in November 2013.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2933 **Ian C. Lucas:** I am just going to give you a copy of a contract that was signed in November 2013, which I think is the Trinidad and Tobago contract, if I can refer to it in that way. You recall that contract?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I did not review the whole thing but it looks proper, yes.

Q2934 **Ian C. Lucas:** Was it the first contract that the business signed?

Jeff Silvester: It was the first contract that we signed working together, Zach and I together, as AggregateIQ, but Zach had done previous work as AggregateIQ before we joined together to do work.



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Q2935 **Ian C. Lucas:** That was the first time you had established a separate company that was composed of the two of you working together to do this type of work?

Jeff Silvester: It was the first contract we signed after incorporating, yes.

Q2936 **Ian C. Lucas:** Okay. This is a very impressive contract for a brand new company to receive. There is a lot of money involved in it, isn't there?

Jeff Silvester: Yes and no. It was a lot of work, but both Zach and I had already been working in the political space and in the software development space, so from a software development perspective it is not a huge amount of money.

Q2937 **Ian C. Lucas:** How did you come to get that contract?

Jeff Silvester: I think I mentioned earlier Mr Wylie approached us with respect to some advice to some work that he was doing with his employer, and then we entered into discussions with him about giving just general advice. Then he asked if we could create this particular political CRM for them.

Q2938 **Ian C. Lucas:** Can I give you Mr Wylie's account of why this business, AIQ, started? He said, "The reason AIQ was set up originally was because several key people, who later became the principal officers of AIQ, were not mobile to move to London for family reasons. The compromise was to establish a company in Canada and IP agreements would be reached so that SCL/CA would own the products of their work". To the best of Mr Wylie's knowledge, AIQ had no independent clients outside of SCL or Cambridge Analytica from 2013 to 2016. Do you think that is an accurate representation of what happened?

Jeff Silvester: Not entirely, no.

Q2939 **Ian C. Lucas:** What parts of it are not accurate?

Jeff Silvester: We did work with SCL from 2013 through to the beginning of 2016.

Q2940 **Ian C. Lucas:** They were the main client I think you said earlier?

Jeff Silvester: They were our largest client, to be sure, but as I said, Zach had already had clients as he was operating as AggregateIQ as a trade name, and we had clients in 2014, 2015 and 2016 that were not SCL. Moreover, the information about us creating the company to not move to London is also not accurate. We had never contemplated moving to London doing this work at all. I live in Victoria and I have for a long time, and Zach does, too. At the time I had a family, but when we are talking about this work, there was never any contemplation of moving to London.

Q2941 **Ian C. Lucas:** You have known since Mr Wylie since 2005?



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Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2942 **Ian C. Lucas:** So you know him quite well. Why did he say this if it was not true?

Jeff Silvester: I have asked myself the same thing. I don't know. With respect to some of the things he said, as I mentioned earlier, I did reach out. I sent him a text message after hearing some of the reports in the media because I thought it had to be a misunderstanding. It may have been a wrong number, I don't know, but I have not been able to speak to him.

Part of the challenge that I know this Committee is facing, which you have described to me as well, is that you hear a lot of different accounts. That is why I came, because I can tell you definitively what we have done and what we have not done. That is why I have come. With respect to Mr Wylie's statement and why has he said some of these things, he may believe it to be true, I don't know. On quite a number of things, as I have mentioned, he is mistaken.

Q2943 **Ian C. Lucas:** When the business started, it was a Trinidad and Tobago contract. Did that involve you going to Trinidad and Tobago?

Jeff Silvester: After it was finished we had a contractor go down to train the political party on the software that we built, but I never went down there.

Q2944 **Ian C. Lucas:** It seems to me this is all a very expensive project for a brand new company to be delivering?

Jeff Silvester: It is a lot of work, certainly.

Q2945 **Ian C. Lucas:** Where did your capital come from for this?

Jeff Silvester: From our own funds, from myself and Zach.

Ian C. Lucas: From you personally and from Zach?

Jeff Silvester: Correct. The only funds we used in the creation of AggregateIQ were our own or those that we have used from general revenue.

Q2946 **Ian C. Lucas:** All of the shareholding in the company is the two of you?

Jeff Silvester: No, at present we have others but they are both folks from Victoria. Zach and I retained the vast majority and we are the only directors. We had no outside investment at all in the creation of the company. It was only Zach and I that put any money towards that and we have done all the work to set it up.

Q2947 **Ian C. Lucas:** You have had no outside investment in the company?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2948 **Ian C. Lucas:** Did you take any loans?



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Jeff Silvester: We certainly received credit from providers like Facebook and Google. When you run ads on those networks you can get like a line of credit so you do not have to prepay to run the ad, you can run the ad and then pay at the end of the money. We certainly had extensions of credit in that respect but we have not had any business operation loans at all. The only money we have used for the company is the money either from revenue or from myself and Mr Massingham.

Q2949 **Ian C. Lucas:** My colleague, Brendan O'Hara, mentioned Robert Mercer a few moments ago. You said he had not invested in the company.

Jeff Silvester: No.

Ian C. Lucas: Has he come to an agreement concerning intellectual property with your company?

Jeff Silvester: Mr Mercer has not, no. We do have an intellectual property agreement with SCL. It wasn't this agreement, I think it was a later one with respect to the Ripon tool. We agreed with SCL that, at the end of our development process for the Ripon product, if they paid us on time and were happy with the product we would then transfer the code to them and they would own that code. That is fairly standard for any software development contract work.

Q2950 **Ian C. Lucas:** When did you first hear the name Cambridge Analytica?

Jeff Silvester: It was in early 2014. It was after we completed this work with respect to Trinidad and Tobago. We were talking with SCL about the work we were going to do on their Ripon project. Sometime in and around that time they mentioned they were working with a company out of the US called Cambridge Analytica.

Q2951 **Ian C. Lucas:** Who mentioned they were working with a company called Cambridge Analytica?

Jeff Silvester: I don't know who would have said it first. We had discussions with folks in their office at that time. However, I do recall at that time they did mention this Cambridge Analytica company. I don't remember exactly who it was. In those discussions were a couple of employees. Mr Nix was part of that discussion as well. It could have been any of them.

Q2952 **Ian C. Lucas:** Your evidence from the statement you provided to us is that AIQ has never contracted with Cambridge Analytica?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2953 **Ian C. Lucas:** You are quite certain of that?

Jeff Silvester: Yes.

Q2954 **Ian C. Lucas:** Have you seen the document that was produced to this Committee by Mr Wylie?

Jeff Silvester: Yes.



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Q2955 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is not signed—

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Ian C. Lucas: —but is a draft agreement between Cambridge Analytica and AIQ.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I had not seen that until it was published on your website. On the face of it, it does look similar to an agreement we have with SCL but I did not review every last detail to see if it matched or not. As I said, we did have agreements with SCL. I cannot verify if that is authentic or not. I don't know why it was created and I had never seen it until it was posted on your website.

Q2956 **Ian C. Lucas:** Could it be the case that there is an agreement between AIQ and Cambridge Analytica that you do not know about?

Jeff Silvester: No, there is no situation where there could be an agreement that I am unaware of.

Q2957 **Ian C. Lucas:** The picture we have of SCL and Cambridge Analytica, from the evidence to this Committee, is that they are very closely linked indeed. The legal difference, frankly, between a relationship with SCL and a relationship with Cambridge Analytica would be quite difficult to establish as far as we are concerned.

Jeff Silvester: When we first started with the Trinidad work that we talked about earlier, and we started entering into discussions with SCL about the network, we did look at the register to see who owned SCL. We saw that there was this SCL Group. We saw no mention at that time of anything to do with Cambridge Analytica. We did understand later that Mr Nix had a role with both companies and we understood that they were working together. We don't know, and still do not really understand, what the full relationship was, who owned whom and who controlled what. That was nothing to do with us. As I said, we did do work for SCL. We understood they had some type of business relationship with Cambridge Analytica but not the full extent of that relationship.

Q2958 **Ian C. Lucas:** Is it right you did some work that was in connection with John Bolton's office concerning the congressional elections?

Jeff Silvester: We didn't work directly with his office. We did some work with SCL, which was providing some service to his office.

Q2959 **Ian C. Lucas:** You were in e-mail communications with his office?

Jeff Silvester: Not his office, no. We were only ever in communication with SCL staff in that regard.

Q2960 **Ian C. Lucas:** You were copied into correspondence?

Jeff Silvester: It is possible we were copied on correspondence that folks from SCL had received directly from the campaign but we did not communicate directly with them.



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Q2961 **Ian C. Lucas:** You were involved in a project involving John Bolton's office and SCL?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2962 **Ian C. Lucas:** What was that project?

Jeff Silvester: It was a Super PAC or a political action committee in support of Mr Bolton and some of his ideas, as I understood it. The work itself involved promoting some of his views with respect to national security and such. We provided the customer relationship management political tool that I mentioned so they could track responses, I understand.

Q2963 **Ian C. Lucas:** What was the nature of the technical work you did on the Trinidad and Tobago election?

Jeff Silvester: The technical work for Trinidad with connection to that and then to Bolton you mean, or just what technical work did we do on Trinidad and Tobago?

Ian C. Lucas: Yes, what technical work did you do in Trinidad and Tobago?

Jeff Silvester: In Trinidad and Tobago there were two things that we did essentially, aside from the training I mentioned earlier. We created a political customer relationship management tool and deployed that for one of their political parties. There was a little tiny bit of website work that went along with that as it connected to that political customer relationship management tool. We also provided some anonymous commercially available information on popular websites to SCL about Trinidad and Tobago.

Ian C. Lucas: Thank you very much.

Q2964 **Chair:** Going back on one of the points that Ian Lucas raised, are you able to say roughly what proportion of your revenue came from SCL work in those years, 2013 to 2016?

Jeff Silvester: 2013 through to 2015 would be an easier one for me to think about. I don't know exactly but I would say until mid-2015 roughly 80% of the revenue was probably from SCL but it wasn't 80% of the work. We were working to build our own products as a company and work for smaller clients along the way.

Q2965 **Chair:** Can you name the other clients you were working for?

Jeff Silvester: Unfortunately, I cannot. We do it all confidentially.

Q2966 **Chair:** Were these local companies in Victoria?

Jeff Silvester: Exactly. None in Victoria but there were some local ones in British Colombia, but mostly located in Canada and the United States.

Q2967 **Chair:** You can see why people ask you these questions about Cambridge



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Analytica and SCL. In those years in particular, you are a new company so they are important years, and your business basically is SCL. SCL was paying the mortgage.

Jeff Silvester: They were certainly our largest client, yes.

Q2968 **Chair:** There were no other big clients you were bringing in. Are you going out looking for new businesses and new clients to work with? How much time are you spending on new business development at this time?

Jeff Silvester: Almost all of Zach's time is spent on business development. We have an incredibly long sales cycle. The Brexit campaign aside, which was unusually quick, our sales cycle can typically last months from the point where we start speaking to a client to the point where they actually start advertising or we start making the website. In our early years a large part of that was developing our own tools and ability to do that. We did have some small clients at that time but it typically takes a good chunk of time to get some of those larger clients.

Q2969 **Chair:** Most people who work in agency-type businesses where you are working for clients would look at your business and say you might be legally separate but your business basically is that client. Without SCL you really do not have a business to speak of and your major work is all coming through them.

Jeff Silvester: In 2014 and early 2015 they certainly were the majority of our work. If they decided to stop working with us it would have hurt, no doubt. However, we still would have been a company and we still would have been working because we had other clients. Now, of course, we have not worked with them or even talked to them since early 2016. None of our work now comes from them in any way. We do work with clients predominately in the United States but also in Canada—and, as you know, the United Kingdom—and around the world, we continue to do that.

Q2970 **Paul Farrelly:** I want to ask a couple of questions but most of the loose ends have just been tied up by Mr Lucas and the Chair. The one thing that gives us all trouble is the lack of co-operation with the ICO at the moment. You will recognise the reasons for that. When you have responded to the ICO and cited client confidentiality, have you asked any of your clients whether you could be released from confidentiality at all?

Jeff Silvester: We did, yes.

Q2971 **Paul Farrelly:** In your responses to the ICO have you said the clients have refused to release you from confidentiality?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. Without going into specifics now I am happy to provide that information to you and you can see in the letter exactly what we have done.

Q2972 **Paul Farrelly:** It seems, notwithstanding it was your major starting



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client as a company, your relationship with the SCL group of companies has been misrepresented to us.

Jeff Silvester: We did work for them. We did some contract work for SCL, which is true. The nature of our relationship with them though has been misrepresented or perhaps mistaken, I guess would be a better way of putting it. I can understand how seeing an internal document such as on your website might lead someone to believe we were part of their company. I don't know why they created that internal document. Indeed, one of them even has Zach's name misspelt. It is not our document. It is not our information.

We have been completely separate the whole time. We do work closely with clients when we are working for them. I don't know though why they would call us a "department", like they have said, or "SCL Canada", like you have seen, when that was not the case. We have not been. We have never done any work under that name. We have never received any clients as a result of that. We never had any communication with somebody thinking we were SCL Canada to give us any cause for concern about why we might get that person calling us. When it showed up in the media inquiry, as I said, in 2017 we responded just as I mentioned. I don't know why. However, I can understand how there could be confusion. That is why I came, in order to clarify that.

Q2973 **Paul Farrelly:** The mistake or misrepresentation—if you are telling us the truth and we have no reason to believe you are not telling us the truth—goes to the extent of us being provided with a document bearing the name Cambridge Analytica as further evidence of your supposedly close ties, which you say you didn't sign. It is either a previous internal draft from Cambridge Analytica or the SCL Group, or a fabrication.

Jeff Silvester: I don't know what the answer to that is. It could very well be. All I know is what I have signed or Zach has signed. I know the contracts we have. The one that is on your website, which has Cambridge Analytica on it, is not ours.

I cannot judge the motivation. I don't want to speculate because a lot of what you have seen and a lot of statements from folks are purely speculation. They get a little tiny piece of information and then speculate beyond that. I really do not want to engage in that. I just want to give you the facts.

Q2974 **Paul Farrelly:** You say in your evidence, and you have said it publicly, your work with Cambridge Analytica ended with the presidential primary.

Jeff Silvester: Correct, in early 2016.

Paul Farrelly: May 2016.

Jeff Silvester: Exactly.

Q2975 **Paul Farrelly:** Did they ever approach you about doing any work on the UK referendum?



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Jeff Silvester: SCL?

Paul Farrelly: Yes.

Jeff Silvester: No. The work we did on the UK referendum was entirely separate.

Paul Farrelly: I am just asking whether they approached you.

Jeff Silvester: No.

Q2976 **Paul Farrelly:** Why did you not do any further work with them?

Jeff Silvester: The relationship was ending, which was clear. We had done that work during the presidential primary. We created that political CRM and they deployed it for the campaign. The campaign ended up not using the information, as I have described, which was in that CRM. They tried to use it but found it was out of date and was not useful. They ended up using another tool altogether. I do not know SCL's reasons but we knew well in advance we would not be doing any more work with them.

Q2977 **Paul Farrelly:** They were moving on from you?

Jeff Silvester: They were moving on, yes. In fact, in their statement in 2017, in the same article about the fact they had Zach's phone number on their website, they stated they were using us until they built their own internal capacity to do the same and then the relationship ended.

Q2978 **Paul Farrelly:** One interesting thing in your evidence to us is where you say you refused to get involved in distributing particularly awful advertisements during the Nigerian elections.

Jeff Silvester: Yes. During the Nigerian election we were given a video by SCL that was particularly disturbing. I, unfortunately, did see it. We right away knew we were not going to run ads to that. We let them know very quickly we were not willing to do that. Subsequent to that we added language to our standard contracts.

Q2979 **Paul Farrelly:** I am glad to hear you said that because other people did not have any such qualms. However, it begs the question why did you carry on working with a firm that was prepared to distribute ads like that?

Jeff Silvester: Perhaps two parts; campaigns approach us from time to time with requests where, on the face of it, we know that to do something like that is not necessarily the right thing to do. However, on the face of it, they are coming to you quite innocently. I like to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. Campaigns are hectic and quite chaotic as I am sure all of you know. We do not know who produced that video and I do not know the circumstances by which it came to us. It is entirely possible the client was pressuring SCL to run it. That is some of the information we got, although it is not entirely clear. I do not know if SCL created it or if the client created it. The communication we had with the staff at the time was that they were equally baffled by it. I don't



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know at what level that went to, other than just the folks who were working on that project or not so I do not want to speak to that.

In terms of continuing to work for them, I can think of instances where a campaign has come to us and said, "We are having trouble getting volunteers to do phoning. Why don't we just use a robot dialler to phone everybody all at once and it'll be a lot cheaper?" Of course, in the state in the United States we were working in you are not allowed to do that. You cannot just autodial everybody without their permission. The campaign did not really appreciate that, they were genuinely trying to solve a problem. We tend to give people the benefit of the doubt in that respect, that people are not trying to be deceptive or evil but are just trying to solve a problem. We had not had any experience previous to that with SCL where anything like that happened and we did not have any experience since so we continued to work with them.

Q2980 Paul Farrelly: To nail down evidentially one bit of the misrepresentation or the speculation, I do not know how it works in Canada but here if you are incorporated as a private or a public limited company every year you file an annual return with the Companies House that shows the shareholders.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, we have our shareholders listed.

Q2981 Paul Farrelly: Could you provide us with those? They are called the annual returns here, I do not know what they are called in Canada.

Jeff Silvester: They are similar documents in Canada. I will see if we can deliver that to you afterwards.

Paul Farrelly: That will be public information.

Jeff Silvester: The public can go into the lawyers' office and look at it. I know the journalists from "Channel 4 News" and from *The Times Colonist* in Canada went and looked at that while they were in Victoria.

Paul Farrelly: Thank you.

Q2982 Chair: You said you stopped working with SCL in May 2016, is that right?

Jeff Silvester: We stopped doing any of the work on Ripon quite a bit earlier. We did do some online advertising until January or February, I do not have those dates right in front of me although I can find it for you if you like. We were doing some work on the campaign's website. That work continued until the campaign stopped, I think on 4 or 5 May or something like that in 2016.

Q2983 Chair: There was a period of time when you were working both for SCL in America and for Vote Leave in the UK?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. We started the Vote Leave work just after 13 April. We still did website work for SCL for that campaign until 5 or 6 May, or something like that. All the direction at that point was coming from the campaign and not from SCL. The final communications were two-way,



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one for them to ask for the code and one for us to get our final invoice paid in May.

Chair: We are going to come on now to some questions about the referendum work itself.

Q2984 **Paul Farrelly:** I wanted to come to your work on Vote Leave. Could you describe generally what that work was, what you did?

Jeff Silvester: With Vote Leave the vast majority was online advertising. We also did a little bit of website work, creating landing pages, or I should say small webpages. We also did a little bit of IT work for them on some systems that were not working.

Q2985 **Paul Farrelly:** It is their responsibility to fulfil the UK electoral legal obligations, not yours. However, you do say in your evidence that you made some background checks.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2986 **Paul Farrelly:** One of the issues for them—not necessarily for you, given you did some checks—is whether the BeLeave group, or the individual Darren Grimes because BeLeave was not registered as a campaigning entity, tried to circumvent the referendum law. In your evidence you say each of the organisations—Vote Leave, Veterans for Britain, Darren Grimes, DUP Vote to Leave—directed you independently.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q2987 **Paul Farrelly:** Can you tell us what sort of directions Darren Grimes gave you?

Jeff Silvester: At the beginning Mr Grimes described the nature of the folks that he wanted to show ads to and the general tenor and type of advertisement he wanted to run. As we started he gave us direction on individual ads, along with approval for which ones we were to run for him.

Q2988 **Paul Farrelly:** Was an audience data file given to you?

Jeff Silvester: Not a data file, no. With respect to BeLeave he gave us a general demographic in terms of the younger people he wanted to target, along with the key messages he thought would appeal to a young audience.

Q2989 **Paul Farrelly:** You created the audience?

Jeff Silvester: When you are using a tool like Facebook or Google you can go in and enter that demographic information, along with geography and general interest categories. We put that demographic information into Facebook—and Google, I believe—and then we helped him create the ads to make sure they fitted within the scope of ads that could run on either Facebook or Google and that sort of thing.

Q2990 **Paul Farrelly:** I do not want to show my ignorance about computing



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matters, in the Facebook letter they mention that the ads you ran on behalf of Vote Leave and BeLeave shared exact audiences in some instances.

Jeff Silvester: It is theoretically possible because the age ranges are not that organic. I know the ads we were running for BeLeave were aimed at young people so I can't imagine that would have been the same audience. I, unfortunately, do not have access to Facebook right now to be able to go back and look at that. However, once I do get that access back I am happy to look. I know the direction we got from Mr Grimes came from him. If there happened to be similar audiences, I don't know. In fact, the vast majority of that direction came via the BeLeave Slack channel, which I know has been provided to the Electoral Commission.

Q2991 **Paul Farrelly:** You would have created the—

Jeff Silvester: The physical ad and the audience in Facebook, we would create that, yes.

Q2992 **Paul Farrelly:** In terms of Vote Leave, did they give you the people they wanted you to target?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, they provided us with a very similar type of information but it was different. Vote Leave was really looking at an older audience in rural areas. They believed a slightly more conservative voter would be more likely to vote for leave so those were the audiences we would use for Vote Leave.

Q2993 **Paul Farrelly:** To fulfil the BeLeave brief, as it were, you would not necessarily have simply used a file that had been provided by Vote Leave?

Jeff Silvester: No. All of the direction from BeLeave came from BeLeave. We do not share information between clients at all.

Q2994 **Paul Farrelly:** I do not want to delay with too many questions about this, but perhaps regarding Facebook you could let us have a commentary back on it?

Jeff Silvester: I will take a fuller look at that, yes.

Q2995 **Paul Farrelly:** That is just for one area on common audiences. Could you tell us who your contact was at Veterans for Britain?

Jeff Silvester: I looked at this the other day, Will Carver was our prime contact.

Q2996 **Paul Farrelly:** For DUP Vote to Leave?

Jeff Silvester: For DUP we had a number of contacts. DUP was a lot smaller so we had a lot less interaction. I can get that for you. I don't recall off the top of my head but I can certainly get that for you and provide it after.

Q2997 **Paul Farrelly:** To the best of your knowledge, despite the way the



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payments were made, these were independent organisations?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, to us they appeared to be entirely independent.

Q2998 **Paul Farrelly:** Independent of each other?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, and all the direction from each of them came from them independently of each other. In fact, the ads we were running on their behalf looked completely different. Their themes were all diverse and the ads we ran were just for them. We reported to each of them their spending and everything with regard to how that was going.

Q2999 **Julie Elliott:** I want to pick up on a couple of points you raised. How were you introduced to your clients on the UK referendum?

Jeff Silvester: I think I mentioned already about Vote Leave. With respect to BeLeave, Mr Grimes reached out to us via e-mail. With Veterans for Britain, there was certainly an e-mail conversation. I do not know who started it although I could look into that and get back to you.

Julie Elliott: Could you provide us with that, please?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I will see if I can find that for you. Certainly I have been asked for some of that information from the Information and Privacy Commissioner in British Columbia. As much as I was able to find, I am happy to get that for you as well. I don't recall with the DUP, but again I can look into that.

Q3000 **Julie Elliott:** What was the value of the advertising you did with the UK referendum?

Jeff Silvester: I don't know the exact amounts of the advertising but I can tell you the total amounts they paid us. For Vote Leave it was around £2.9 million, BeLeave was about £625,000, Veterans for Britain was around £100,000, and the DUP was around £32,000. If you need exact numbers I would have to go back and calculate that for you but that is approximately what it was.

Q3001 **Julie Elliott:** That was all used on advertising?

Jeff Silvester: For BeLeave, Veterans and the DUP the vast majority of it was advertising. With Veterans for Britain and for BeLeave we also created a couple of small what we call landing pages. That is like a single page website and when you click on an advertisement it shows that, so the picture on your advertisement matches the picture on your website when you land on that website. We did not charge BeLeave for it separately but we did do that work.

Q3002 **Julie Elliott:** Could you give us a notional value for that, if you did not charge for it?

Jeff Silvester: Maybe \$100 or something. We just built that into the costs in terms of the advertising because that is fairly standard with advertising.



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We also did more website work for Vote Leave than for the others and we also did some IT work. I think we invoiced somewhere about US\$40,000 for the IT work we did for Vote Leave. We charged a retainer for some of the general website and advertising services. I do not have the exact number but it was around US\$40,000 to US\$50,000 for a month, and it was two and a half months or so.

Q3003 **Julie Elliott:** The online advertising you did, did that involve custom audiences?

Jeff Silvester: We created a variety of different audiences at different times. Should I speak generally about all of them or do you mean for one client specifically? With Veterans, DUP and BeLeave I do not think we did any custom audiences. We built audiences out of the general demographic category. Then when people go to the website—I think I talked earlier about retargeting—we used some of that information. Again, it is quite generic information with respect to how ads would run for that so it is not that they gave us any voter information to use.

With Vote Leave I know, for example, we ran ads with respect to a contest they were running that included advertisements for people who had visited their website and expressed interest in it. At the end of the campaign there were ads to people who had signed up to volunteer or who had said they would like Vote Leave to remind them to vote. Those were audiences we created in Facebook using information from the campaign.

Q3004 **Julie Elliott:** Would you say that any of those audiences were used by Vote Leave and BeLeave?

Jeff Silvester: No, those audiences would only be used by—

Q3005 **Julie Elliott:** There is some evidence that has gone to the Electoral Commission that suggests they were exactly the same audiences. What would you have to say about that?

Jeff Silvester: We did not use the audiences we created for Vote Leave or for BeLeave for either of the other ones. I have just been given that information today. I am happy to review it and to look back, if I can.

Julie Elliott: Would you come back to us with that?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I caveat that by saying I currently do not have access to our Facebook ad account to be able to dig into it much more. I know definitively that is not something we do, with respect to sharing information between clients. If there happened to be an audience that shared characteristics with respect to being conservative or something of that nature, it is theoretically possible. However, again, I do not have access to those groups now. I can see all of the direction from BeLeave, for example, now that came through to tell us exactly how to advertise. Any commonalities are not something we certainly did deliberately.

Q3006 **Julie Elliott:** Have you done any other UK election work, apart from



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within the referendum?

Jeff Silvester: We did a website for a Member of Parliament in advance of leadership for the Conservative party. It was a very, very short piece of work.

Julie Elliott: Who was that for?

Jeff Silvester: Mr Gove, but that lasted a very short period of time. We did some work during the election in Northern Ireland.

Julie Elliott: For the Assembly?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I am trying to think if there was any more after that. We certainly have other UK clients but they are not electoral organisations, as I understand it.

Q3007 **Julie Elliott:** Could you have a look at your records and let us know if there is any other UK election work you have been involved with?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. I will say again, I don't believe there is, other than what I have just mentioned. I will double check, if you like.

Q3008 **Julie Elliott:** Thank you. When we asked Chris Vickery whether he thought the EU referendum campaigns had been co-ordinated through the work of AIQ, he replied, "If I was on a jury in America and asked that question, I would conclude that, beyond a shadow of a doubt, there was some sort of collaboration going on".

Why do you think Chris Vickery could be so sure of that collaboration?

Jeff Silvester: I have thought a lot about that because I don't know. As I said, we do not have any information, aside from a little bit of website information, in our Git repository about the Brexit campaign. Therefore I do not know how he could have come to the conclusion that, as a security researcher looking at a Git repository, we have any co-ordination in any way. I have never seen—

Q3009 **Julie Elliott:** Did you have any co-ordination?

Jeff Silvester: No. As I was about to say, I have never seen any evidence of that from either of the campaigns or any of our staff. I do not know how he would come to that conclusion.

Q3010 **Julie Elliott:** Why was the quote, "We couldn't have done it without them" from Dominic Cummings, Vote Leave's campaign manager, on your website for more than a year?

Jeff Silvester: Why was the quote there? He did say that. When we would look for clients they would look at that and perhaps think slightly more positively about us as a result.

Julie Elliott: Or negatively.

Jeff Silvester: Or negatively. That does happen too, yes.



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Q3011 **Julie Elliott:** Do you not think that suggests you were an intrinsic part of the campaign, for him to have said that and to have put so much store in what he said.

Jeff Silvester: I do not think so. There are so many people working on campaigns, as you all know. You have the volunteers, you have campaign managers, even people doing finance and everything, fundraisers and the whole nine yards. We were certainly a component of that, doing online advertising.

Q3012 **Julie Elliott:** It is a quite a statement to say, "We couldn't have done it without them".

Jeff Silvester: It is certainly a generous statement, yes, I would agree.

Q3013 **Julie Elliott:** Why was it removed in the middle of March 2018?

Jeff Silvester: March 2018 was when we started getting media inquiries about some of the stuff we are talking about today.

At that time we also started getting a large number of hacking attempts on our website. We used to use a fairly common tool for our website called WordPress. We had to take down that WordPress site because it was unable to handle all of the requests and they were trying to hack into our website. We converted it into a simple html page. During that time as well we added a statement to our website to clarify and provide some facts about AggregateIQ. We did not want any information about that to get in the way of us trying to give a very clear message with the facts about us out there to the public.

Julie Elliott: Thank you.

Q3014 **Chair:** You said in your written statement that all of the audience files you received during the campaign came from Vote Leave, they were not created by you or anyone else.

Jeff Silvester: In my statement I said that? I think I said it earlier. Anything we do for the client is based off information provided by the client, I think that is what I said in the statement. That is true.

Q3015 **Chair:** You said in your statement, "The only information we used in our work for Vote Leave was information that was provided to us by Vote Leave".

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q3016 **Chair:** If—as Facebook has told us—on the BeLeave page and on the Vote Leave page, to support their ad targeting, is a dataset that is exactly the same that must mean you were given the same dataset by Vote Leave and BeLeave?

Jeff Silvester: I have not been able to investigate that so I do not want to speak to that specifically.

Q3017 **Chair:** It is the logic of what you have said already. If the only



information you were given is given to you by your clients, and both clients have presented the same information, that information was given to you by them.

Jeff Silvester: I would have to speak in hypotheticals to answer your question properly, if you will permit that for a moment. I can say in theory if there was a dataset that was exactly the same—although I do not believe we did any direct BeLeave customer groups—it is possible they are referring to demographic targeting information that is the same. That is, again, theoretically possible.

Therefore there are two theoretical possibilities. One would be that we got information from the clients that was the same. Whether that was the intention or not, I don't know. Again, I do not know the direct circumstances of this. It is a possibility that in theory, although I do not believe that is the case, someone at AggregateIQ made a mistake. Again, it is theoretically possible.

However, I do not know what the circumstances of that particular audience are; whether it was a custom audience that was created from e-mails and names or whether it was an audience that was created by just entering demographic information, I do not know. Presumably if you enter the exact same information on Facebook when creating an audience, like age range and location, then you would advertise to the same people. In this particular audience I do not know the set of circumstances around that. As I said, I will happily look into that. On the face of it, it seems concerning but, again, all the direction we got from each client was quite separate.

Q3018 **Chair:** For the record and for people who have not read the letter that Facebook sent the Electoral Commission, they say, "Our investigations to date have found that there was one data file custom audience, one website custom audience and one lookalike audience that were used to select targeting criteria for potential ads during this period by both Vote Leave and BeLeave pages". The existence of those files and them being exactly the same would suggest that either Vote Leave had given those files to BeLeave, who then gave them to you, or that you or someone in your company used the Vote Leave files for BeLeave advertising, or at least made that possible by allowing those datasets to exist on both pages.

Jeff Silvester: Theoretically, yes.

Q3019 **Chair:** It has to be one or the other, doesn't it?

Jeff Silvester: Based on what you read there, I do not know if they mean that those datasets were used on both pages or that both used that number of datasets.

Q3020 **Chair:** They are saying, "...there was one data file custom audience", uploaded e-mail address of individuals to be targeted, "... one website custom audience", I guess that is an audience built up from information



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that has been gathered—

Jeff Silvester: People visiting websites, correct.

Chair: —“... and one lookalike audience”. There is one of each of those, they are exactly the same and they exist on both pages.

Jeff Silvester: I will definitely look into it. I would be surprised by that.

Q3021 **Chair:** Facebook are not speculating.

Jeff Silvester: I understand that.

Chair: They have done what you cannot do, because you have been locked out of Facebook—

Jeff Silvester: Exactly.

Chair: —which is to go in and look. That is what they found.

The reason it is important is that obviously the issue of co-ordination between campaigns is important here too. If there are common datasets being used by different campaigns then that is either them sharing them between each other, which they should not do, or you, as a company because you are working across all these people, using common datasets to support all of your work. Again, I think that would cause issues.

Jeff Silvester: Either would be cause for concern. I can see that the Electoral Commission has that information. If they need more information from us then we are happy to provide it.

Paul Farrelly: That was exactly what I was trying to say, it is important.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I apologise. I try not to speculate with respect to my answers. I like to be certain when I provide you information. In this regard I will happily go and look to see what I can find and I will make sure I provide all that information to you and, again, to the Electoral Commission if they need it.

Q3022 **Chair:** In your work in America that you spoke about earlier on, you have created software tools like Ripon to help take raw data and turn it into an effective targeting tool.

Jeff Silvester: I do not know if “raw data” is correct.

Chair: Different datasets.

Jeff Silvester: I do not know how long each of you has been involved in politics. The first political CRM was probably Microsoft Excel.

Chair: Yes, we are all familiar with that.

Jeff Silvester: That is the scope of the information that we will get.

Chair: Yes, I am not interested at this stage in a history of CRM tools.

Jeff Silvester: No.



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Chair: We need to understand what you do and what your company does. When you are working in America you developed Ripon for SCL to support their work to help make datasets and help create targeting tools.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, it gives the clients the ability to interrogate that information.

Q3023 **Chair:** Also part of what you say you do is ad targeting. You have audience datasets you are using to target voters through sites like Facebook, is that correct?

Jeff Silvester: We do not have set targets.

Q3024 **Chair:** You have been given a custom audience or you have been given—

Jeff Silvester: We are given the general information or a custom audience, correct.

Q3025 **Chair:** Yes, exactly. In the referendum campaign you are not doing that. All you are doing is running ads off audiences.

Jeff Silvester: In the referendum campaign we—

Chair: Audiences you have been given by them.

Jeff Silvester: Audiences were given to us by the client, yes. That is always the case, even in the US.

Q3026 **Chair:** In the US you are doing at least two things. You are developing software and tools to help the client with their targeting and then you are executing the ad campaigns as well.

Jeff Silvester: In the case of Vote Leave, and I think Remain as well, they each used the same political CRM tool called Nationbuilder. They had no need for our own political CRM for that. That tool was their way of keeping track of who would vote for who. In theory, if they wanted to run ads to people based on who said they would volunteer, they could give us an audience from Nationbuilder. In a sense the work was the same. We did some custom software development for Vote Leave with respect to fixing some of the challenges they had during the campaign, I mentioned that earlier. Not with the other ones, the other ones were just advertising and mild website work.

Q3027 **Chair:** You were brought in so you were hired. Vote Leave gets the official designation the day after you are hired and you are running ads within a few days of that.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I think it was the Friday after that.

Q3028 **Chair:** It is a pretty short lead-in time for a campaign of this complexity.

Jeff Silvester: It was a ridiculous amount of time to get it done so we did scramble. The nice thing with Facebook, which is predominately where we started, and Google is that it does not take long to create an advertising campaign. It is very easy. The trick is in doing it right. To



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create the campaign for their launch the work is not in placing the ads, the work is in creating the ads and understanding what the client wants. That is the bulk of the work for us in that stage. Understanding what the client's needs are and what their wants are is most of the work. When it comes time to place the ads, it does not take that long. You are choosing those audiences as I have described, you are choosing the frequency, setting budgets and then setting them up.

Q3029 **Chair:** In this case all that work had already been done not by you but by them it would seem.

Jeff Silvester: It is theoretically possible for anyone. You could sign up right now.

Q3030 **Chair:** I am not asking what is theoretically possible, I am saying in this case. I cannot believe you could have done all this in two or three days.

Jeff Silvester: We did. That is not unusual. We created a number of graphics. They had graphics already involved from Vote Leave that we used to create their advertisements. They already had their messages all worked out.

Q3031 **Chair:** It must be that until the day before the designation they did not have anyone in place to do this work.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q3032 **Chair:** It seems pretty cavalier given designations are about to be made and the campaign is about to start. We know that Leave.EU had been working on this for six months or more in the hope they might get the designation.

Jeff Silvester: It was certainly hectic, I could say that. With respect to their timing, I cannot speak to that. That is a question for them. From our perspective it was a lot of work very quickly, yes.

Q3033 **Chair:** Is your company registered for VAT in the UK?

Jeff Silvester: No.

Q3034 **Chair:** Why not?

Jeff Silvester: We do all our work in Canada.

Q3035 **Chair:** As you know there are UK tax rules that companies that supply work and services above a certain value—I think it is about £70,000—are required to register for VAT.

Jeff Silvester: I am not a tax lawyer but we understood that it would have to be for work done in the UK over a certain value.

Q3036 **Chair:** You are doing that work in the UK for Vote Leave, aren't you?

Jeff Silvester: The work takes place in Canada.

Q3037 **Chair:** I think the rules also apply for people supplying work into the UK



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from outside the EU.

Jeff Silvester: That does not match the advice we got. If you have more information than I do then I can certainly look at that.

Q3038 **Chair:** Some might say obviously that if you are working with a supplier who is not required to pay VAT then effectively you are getting a 20% bump on your budget.

Jeff Silvester: True.

Q3039 **Chair:** Yes, it is quite a big advantage.

Jeff Silvester: It would be. Certainly we have clients in Canada who choose not to work with us because we are Canadian and, of course, then you have either provincial or federal sales tax to put on it as well. That happens all over the place.

Q3040 **Chair:** Did you take advice at the time on that?

Jeff Silvester: We take advice at a variety of times on a variety of issues from our legal counsel.

Q3041 **Chair:** I am sure you do. What we are asking about is at this particular time, from 31 March when you were first introduced to the end of the campaign at the end of June, did you take advice on whether you should have registered for VAT and whether VAT should be chargeable on the bills you were sending?

Jeff Silvester: We certainly believe we did our due diligence in that respect, yes. I do not want to speak to the specific conversations we have with legal counsel at different times. I believe we conducted sufficient due diligence at that point.

Chair: I do not know what that means.

Q3042 **Paul Farrelly:** To reiterate, Chair, Mr Silvester you told me you created the audiences for BeLeave and that each of the different campaigns targeted different audiences.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q3043 **Paul Farrelly:** Therefore there is quite some reconciliation to do between your account and what has been sent to us.

Jeff Silvester: If what is being suggested in the information provided is true then there is a lot for us to look at because I do not believe that we did either inadvertently or intentionally.

Q3044 **Paul Farrelly:** It could be that Facebook do not have it fully correct, indeed including the start date they supplied us.

Jeff Silvester: I would not want to speculate on that, yes. How it is written I cannot speak to. Like I said, I am going to go back and look very carefully at that. Any findings I have, I will share with the Committee.



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Q3045 **Ian C. Lucas:** You said it was Mark Gettleson who introduced—

Jeff Silvester: Yes, Mr Gettleson sent me and Zach an e-mail, introducing us to Henry on the Vote Leave campaign.

Q3046 **Ian C. Lucas:** Have you met him?

Jeff Silvester: Mark Gettleson?

Ian C. Lucas: Yes.

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I have met Mr Gettleson three or four times, yes, around that.

Q3047 **Ian C. Lucas:** When did you first meet him?

Jeff Silvester: 2014-ish.

Q3048 **Ian C. Lucas:** Have you met him with Chris Wylie?

Jeff Silvester: He knows Chris Wylie. Yes, I know that.

Q3049 **Ian C. Lucas:** He knows Chris Wylie?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. It was through work that we met Mr Gettleson originally.

Q3050 **Ian C. Lucas:** Does Mr Gettleson, as far as you are aware, have a relationship of any sort with SCL?

Jeff Silvester: I do not want to speak for Mr Gettleson, but I understand when I met him he had done or was doing work for SCL for a short period of time.

Q3051 **Ian C. Lucas:** Do you have a marketing department?

Jeff Silvester: We do not really have any departments. In terms of operations, we have developers and we have advertising folks but not for our own marketing.

Q3052 **Ian C. Lucas:** When the referendum was coming up in the UK did you do any marketing to the UK?

Jeff Silvester: Running our own ads to advertise ourselves you mean?

Ian C. Lucas: To promote your capacity, which you have just described to the Committee, to those who were involved in an extremely important election in the UK.

Jeff Silvester: No.

Q3053 **Ian C. Lucas:** You did not market yourself at all?

Jeff Silvester: A lot of the work we get comes from word of mouth or people hearing about us from a variety of sources and they contact us, or it comes from someone who says to us—like in the case of Vote Leave—“I know there is someone who is looking for an advertiser, you should contact them”.



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Q3054 **Ian C. Lucas:** I have always been puzzled that Vote Leave employed your business, AIQ. SCL had had a relationship with AIQ previously and we know SCL or Cambridge Analytica had been in a relationship with Leave.EU. However, there had been no such connection that I knew of before today between SCL and Vote Leave. I have just found a connection, which is Mr Gettleson.

Jeff Silvester: He was not working for SCL at that time.

Q3055 **Ian C. Lucas:** He was close to Chris Wylie.

Jeff Silvester: Chris Wylie was not working for SCL at the time either. I believe Chris Wylie and Mark Gettleson—

Ian C. Lucas: Yes, but there was a connection.

Jeff Silvester: Here is the thing, as you well know, if you look for connections in political work you will find them everywhere because it is not that big of a world. In Canada, for example, I know people who have worked with the Liberal party. I have met the Prime Minister, he was not Prime Minister at the time. However, the notion that means there is something nefarious is not true. It is simply that there is—

Q3056 **Ian C. Lucas:** I did not say there was anything nefarious. I just said there was a connection.

Jeff Silvester: I understand that. Unfortunately, and what I am getting to, is that people then take that and make broad assumptions. I cannot speak for Mr Gettleson and I cannot speak for Mr Wylie. However, Mr Gettleson's introduction was a brief e-mail and that was the extent of the communication he was involved in.

Q3057 **Ian C. Lucas:** If we talk about connections, the connection obviously was with the Vote Leave campaign. You also get work from other organisations who are involved in the Leave campaign and support the Leave campaign, DUP, BeLeave and Veterans for Britain.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Ian C. Lucas: That is on the back of the connection with Vote Leave. They came afterwards, don't they?

Jeff Silvester: They came afterwards, yes. They were all in the last short time at the end of the campaign.

Q3058 **Ian C. Lucas:** I do not know, I have not done an audit on this, but I have a feeling there might be some connections between Vote Leave and all of those organisations.

Jeff Silvester: Other than the fact they were all campaigning for the same outcome, I do not know what their connections were.

Q3059 **Ian C. Lucas:** You did not have individuals dealing with you in common in respect of those separate accounts?



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Jeff Silvester: No. The folks that dealt with us from BeLeave, as I said, was Mr Grimes, Mr Carver was with Veterans. I do not have anything on the tip of my tongue with respect to DUP but I will get that. However, none of those people were people we dealt with from Vote Leave. All the directions from Vote Leave—

Q3060 **Ian C. Lucas:** They are all entirely separate?

Jeff Silvester: They appeared to be to us, yes.

Q3061 **Ian C. Lucas:** The information they gave to you, is that in this GitLab repository?

Jeff Silvester: No. The only information with respect to Brexit that is in there is some of the website work we did during Brexit.

Q3062 **Ian C. Lucas:** When I showed you that—

Jeff Silvester: Yes, that is just what is there, to my knowledge. As I said, I am going to look into that to double check. The information my developers have provided to me, and the information I have been able to obtain, is that there is no personal information from any of the Brexit campaigns in that repository.

Q3063 **Ian C. Lucas:** We know that a lot of the information, as the Chair has just pointed out, has been in common—Facebook has just told us that—in respect of the different campaigns. Do you agree?

Jeff Silvester: I agree he told me that. As I said, I am going to look into it as best as I can and get back to you on that. I saw briefly the report. I did not see that part of it. I have heard what he said and I certainly believe that is what is in the report. I just do not know what that means with respect to what we have done. I am committed to finding that out because, for me, that would be something I would want to know. Certainly that is not consistent with—

Q3064 **Ian C. Lucas:** Why would you want to know that?

Jeff Silvester: If we have then that would be something I would need to let the Electoral Commission know about.

Q3065 **Ian C. Lucas:** You would need to let the Electoral Commission know about that. Why is that?

Jeff Silvester: If it was something we did mistakenly then that is a problem for us. If it is something we did not know about and was provided by a campaign, if indeed this is what Mr Collins has suggested, then certainly that is something the Electoral Commission would need to know. Again, I need to look and see because I don't know.

Q3066 **Ian C. Lucas:** Mistakenly, it is possibly that you shared data between those organisations?

Jeff Silvester: I do not think we have.

Q3067 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is possible?

Jeff Silvester: Anything is theoretically possible. Given the procedures—

Q3068 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is technically theoretically possible where you are the common thread here?

Jeff Silvester: That is what I was going to say. We take great care to make sure we do not share that information. I do not think that came from us. However, I am going to look to make sure that is not the case and, again, I will report back to you.

Q3069 **Ian C. Lucas:** We already had one incident where something happened that should not have happened with GitLab.

Jeff Silvester: Indeed. As I have said, we are not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. We do our best at all times to follow all the rules, to make sure we are within the law and meeting all the guidelines appropriate for the jurisdictions where we work and for the clients. However, it is possible to make mistakes.

Q3070 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is possible you shared that data?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know. As I said, I do not want to speculate.

Q3071 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is possible?

Jeff Silvester: Anything is possible, yes.

Q3072 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is possible you shared the data, can I have a yes or no answer?

Jeff Silvester: It is theoretically possible, yes.

Q3073 **Ian C. Lucas:** It is actually possible?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, except that I would like to look into that to see if that was the case and then give you a definitive answer.

Q3074 **Ian C. Lucas:** Yes, but it is actually possible?

Jeff Silvester: Given the information there are a few possibilities.

Q3075 **Ian C. Lucas:** Given the evidence we have heard it is actually possible?

Jeff Silvester: Again, I don't know how this applies to work that we did. I don't know the circumstances. I would appreciate being able to see that. I just got this information here today. I need to find out. I could see no evidence anywhere, in anything we did while we were doing it during the campaign or in my reviews subsequent of information we provided to the Electoral Commission, the Privacy Commissioner or to the Information Commission of the UK. That is a fact. I am going to go back and look at that specific thing more closely and then I will report back to you. Indeed, if there is anything there that is something I would certainly report to the Electoral Commission.



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Ian C. Lucas: Thank you, Mr Silvester.

Q3076 **Chair:** On that, when you work for a client you take on the administration right to their page so you can run the advertising?

Jeff Silvester: Correct. For advertising it is a form of administrative rights, yes.

Q3077 **Chair:** Did you have different people administering the different pages?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, typically that is what happens.

Q3078 **Chair:** In this case?

Jeff Silvester: I will have to check. What I do not know is if there was a common administrator with respect to the DUP from our side, I have to check that. I do not, unfortunately, have access to be able to confirm that right now. I think that is the case but I do not want to say yes or no right now.

Q3079 **Chair:** Was there a common administrator between Vote Leave and BeLeave?

Jeff Silvester: No, I believe we had a different administrator on Vote Leave and BeLeave.

Q3080 **Chair:** For Veterans for Britain?

Jeff Silvester: I would like to double check to be sure. I believe that is the case for Veterans for Britain. I do not know for DUP but I will double check and get back to you.

Q3081 **Chair:** Do the administrators have access to the same datasets?

Jeff Silvester: The administrator has access to see the ads that are run for each client. In terms of data, to our knowledge—again I am going to follow up on this one issue with respect to the Facebook that you have brought up—the data that we used information from Vote Leave for advertising but not from the other campaigns. Again, I will follow up. Once you create an audience within Facebook you cannot get that information back out again.

Q3082 **Chair:** You received the information, so you have received audience sets, data customer audiences from Vote Leave?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Chair: They have been given to you. People are then using those audiences, effectively uploading them on to the page to support the targeting of advertising?

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q3083 **Chair:** Does everyone who is working on your campaign team have access to all of the information that has been received from Vote Leave?



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Jeff Silvester: No, only the people that are working on that campaign have access to that information. But I will double check.

Q3084 **Chair:** If the campaign is the referendum campaign—and you are working exclusively for people campaigning for Britain to leave the EU and you are receiving data from Vote Leave, in particular, to support that work—does everyone who is working on the referendum campaign have access to all of the information you are receiving?

Jeff Silvester: No, it is only the people who need access to it.

Q3085 **Chair:** Why is it theoretically possible that people within your company could have shared the information with each other?

Jeff Silvester: I cannot control what every employee does all the time. We have guidelines and rules for that. The information here that you have provided does not match with anything I have been able to see that we have done during those campaigns and yet Facebook has found this information. I will go back and look. It could be that I have no evidence that that happened and I can try to find some of the former employees and talk to them. It might not have been anything to do with us, in which case then we did not.

Chair: It could have been people just used files they were given.

Jeff Silvester: It is entirely possible. Again, I do not know the circumstances by which each of those is created. Certainly I would love to be able to talk to Facebook more about that. I will reach out although I do not know that they will respond, but I will look into it.

Q3086 **Chair:** It is either one or the other. The reason I ask this question was if you had processes in place in your company to make sure it was impossible for data to be shared between different clients then you could sit there with some confidence and say, "I know that did not happen".

Jeff Silvester: I do not like to speculate but I would have told you two months ago that there is no problem with our Git repository as well, however in March we were alerted to something that happened there that I was unaware of. I can only speak to the best of my knowledge at any given time. That is why I am here, to try to give you all the information we have. If there is something else I have missed, which is entirely possible, I will look into that and find out.

Q3087 **Chair:** During the campaigns as well were you running the website for these different organisations?

Jeff Silvester: We were helping with some website work for Vote Leave. We created a couple of single pages for BeLeave and one or two single pages for Veterans for Britain.

Q3088 **Chair:** Did you always have the admin rights for those websites?

Jeff Silvester: No. What we do is we will create a separate subdomain. It may be something like web.voteleave.com or something of that nature,



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and then we use that particular service. We do not typically have information to their main website. We have a small sub-website to put those pages on. With respect to Vote Leave we had access to their main website but everybody else is just a sub-website.

Q3089 **Chair:** With Veterans for Britain I believe you gained access to the full admin rights to their site after the referendum.

Jeff Silvester: We did some work for Veterans for Britain after the referendum, correct.

Q3090 **Chair:** What was the nature of that work?

Jeff Silvester: They wanted to update their website because it was old.

Q3091 **Chair:** Even though it was after the referendum?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I think they decided to continue on as an organisation and they wanted a more modern website for that.

Q3092 **Chair:** Mr Lucas asked you about what sort of marketing you did for your business in the UK; have you done marketing for your business since the referendum?

Jeff Silvester: We do not market our business in terms of typical advertising. The way we get clients is through word of mouth, through referrals from other people, and that is it mostly.

Q3093 **Chair:** What is the nature of your work with the Hanbury consultancy in London?

Jeff Silvester: We do have a relationship with them. The specific nature of the relationship is subject to a confidentiality agreement with them.

Chair: Last summer you were listed as a client of theirs.

Jeff Silvester: Correct. I am not sure which way the relationship is in terms of we are their client/they are our client, but we have worked together briefly.

Q3094 **Chair:** Some could look at that at face value and say they do work to promote you—that is a sort of client relationship—but from what you are saying is you worked on joint projects, would that be correct?

Jeff Silvester: We worked on at least one joint project but again the nature of that I cannot get into.

Chair: I just wanted to get an understanding of the nature of the work.

Jeff Silvester: To be clear, the referrals we get come from people that we have worked with in the past and people who we know. I had an old friend reach out to me and suggest I submit a proposal to a client. We did and we got that work. That is generally the nature of how we get work because once you do work in politics other people see it and then they are interested as well.



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Q3095 **Jo Stevens:** Just going on from that about your current clients and past clients. You said before you are the co-founder, there are just two directors—you and Zack Massingham—but you did not know what your approximate turnover was. Can you give us a rough idea what your turnover is?

Jeff Silvester: By turnover you mean revenue?

Jo Stevens: Yes.

Jeff Silvester: In which year; 2015?

Jo Stevens: Now.

Jeff Silvester: I do not know, we are just finishing our taxes for this year.

Q3096 **Jo Stevens:** I used to run a business, I would be able to say because I would be looking at the accounts every month.

Jeff Silvester: The trouble is, depending on the client and depending on the situation, our revenue might be recognised in different years. I would rather give you the perfectly accurate information.

Q3097 **Jo Stevens:** SCL you said represented about 80% of your revenue during the period that you were working them and they were your main client.

Jeff Silvester: Approximately.

Q3098 **Jo Stevens:** Approximately, yes. Have you entirely replaced that revenue with other clients or are you operating with a lower level of revenue than you were when SCL was your client?

Jeff Silvester: Right now we have a number of clients that we are doing work for. The work that we have done for non-SCL clients is way more than all of the work we have done for SCL. Does that answer your question?

Jo Stevens: No, I asked about revenue rather than work.

Jeff Silvester: No, I mean revenue. The revenue from total billables for non-SCL clients far exceed any of the revenue we ever got from SCL.

Q3099 **Jo Stevens:** That is helpful, thank you. Early on in your evidence you were asked about the contract with SCL, Cambridge Analytica—

Jeff Silvester: The one on your website?

Jo Stevens: The one on the DCMS Committee website, yes. You said you did not recognise it and you say in your written evidence you do not recognise it.

Jeff Silvester: From when I have looked at it, it does look somewhat similar to the SCL contract that we did sign—and I think you may have seen—but that particular version of it I have not seen.



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Q3100 **Jo Stevens:** How many contracts did you sign with SCL?

Jeff Silvester: Four, I believe. I do not have them in front of us. Maybe five, I will go through them.

Q3101 **Jo Stevens:** Would you be able to provide those to the Committee?

Jeff Silvester: I cannot. I still have confidentiality obligations with them. I can provide you with a general description of them, if that is helpful. I would need to get permission from the client before I could release that information. I understand some of it has been released publicly.

Jo Stevens: Yes, it has.

Jeff Silvester: In some ways that does not always absolve us entirely of our confidentiality obligations, so I will speak to legal counsel to see what we are able to give you and happy to give that.

Q3102 **Jo Stevens:** That would be helpful if you can provide them or if you can give the dates of—

Jeff Silvester: In any other way where I can describe it.

Jo Stevens: Yes, and the description of the project you are doing and the amount you were paid, that would be helpful.

Jeff Silvester: I can speak about it generally now because we did Trinidad and Tobago work. We did work during the 2014 election cycle, for which I believe you have seen the contract for the Ripon work. That particular contract included a confidentiality agreement and an IP licensing agreement, which we consider all part of the same piece of work as they refer back to each other. That IP licensing meant that at the end of the project once they paid us, and if they are happy with it, we transfer the code to them. There was one more contract in 2015 for one of their clients in the US. That is all of the contracts we have signed with them.

The other work that we did on the US presidential primary, we just did hourly work for them on the work with that.

Q3103 **Jo Stevens:** The Chairman asked you about a London-based company you have done joint work with or a joint project you described. Do you have any other UK clients at the moment?

Jeff Silvester: We have done other work for other clients in the UK, yes.

Q3104 **Jo Stevens:** You have got nothing at the moment?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, we are working with some companies at the moment but they are companies, it is not electoral organisations.

Q3105 **Jo Stevens:** Are you doing any work in relation to the Irish referendum on the repeal of the 8th Amendment?



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Jeff Silvester: No. We did a proposal but we are not doing any work on it.

Q3106 **Jo Stevens:** Who did you do a proposal for?

Jeff Silvester: Save the 8th I think it was—

Q3107 **Jo Stevens:** Where are they based?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know. We never met them. We only spoke and sent them information. We are not working with them.

Q3108 **Jo Stevens:** When you say you sent them information, did you do a costed proposal for them?

Jeff Silvester: I do not know if we did a full proposal or if it was just conversation. I can get back to you if it is important. I was not involved in that but I can find out from the folks working on it.

Q3109 **Jo Stevens:** That would be helpful obviously because the referendum is on 25 May, and I am very interested to know whether or not that proposal was for an organisation that is based in Ireland or whether it is based outside of Ireland.

Jeff Silvester: No, it was based in Ireland, I just did not know the city. It was based in Ireland and it was for a website and advertising work but we did not end up doing that work.

Q3110 **Jo Stevens:** Your written evidence was very helpful, thank you. I went through that very carefully. There seems to be a trend in your evidence. For example, you say that the contract with Cambridge Analytica, which has been referred to earlier in the evidence, "It resembles a contract that we signed with SCL but we have no knowledge of this contract and I am not sure whether it is genuine or not." Do you still stand by that?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I believe I said that right here. I had not seen that previous to it being posted on your site.

Q3111 **Jo Stevens:** So it is fake news, a contract, is it?

Jeff Silvester: Mr Collins and I spoke about it earlier, is that it is entirely possible that they made that but they never sent it to us.

Q3112 **Jo Stevens:** Why would they do that?

Jeff Silvester: I wish I knew. I do not want to speak for another company or another individual. All I know is the part that I know. Anything I say about SCL would be speculative.

Q3113 **Jo Stevens:** You see all contracts that AIQ has signed?

Jeff Silvester: Anything that AIQ has signed I review them before we sign them.

Q3114 **Jo Stevens:** Do you see all contracts that are produced that are not ultimately signed off?



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Jeff Silvester: If we produce them then I would, but not if someone else produces them.

Q3115 **Jo Stevens:** You then go on in your evidence to talk about the Information Commissioner. Again you touched on this earlier in your testimony. The Information Commissioner says very clearly that AIQ has not answered questions that it has been asked and has not provided evidence that it has asked for. You say in your statement, "The Commissioner's recent statement that we refused to answer any further questions is simply not true". So as well as a fake contract we now have the Information Commissioner's office lying or misleading in his statement?

Jeff Silvester: Just mistaken. Because immediately following that we had never told them—and again I will provide you those letters and you can see for yourself, we have never said we would not answer questions. I did say I believed the issue was closed but that is because I believed we had answered everything. I will provide you that information; you can see for yourself. However, right after we learned of that we contacted their office and I believe we have sorted out the miscommunication. We will be meeting with them shortly after we are done here.

Q3116 **Jo Stevens:** You also say in your written evidence, contradicting the evidence we have heard, "Chris Wylie has never been employed by AIQ. He has never done work for AIQ or had any role in the company". You also say finally in your statement of Facebook—who say that they have found administrative links between AIQ and Cambridge Analytica on its platforms—"We do not know what they are referring to". This general feeling of everybody is making it up or this is not true or we do not know what they are talking about; do you understand why I am feeling very sceptical about this evidence?

Jeff Silvester: With respect to Mr Wylie, what I said is 100% true. In no way has he ever worked for my company. He has not been employed by, we have not given him any money. I told you exactly what happened in that he referred us to SCL and did that work very early on. I have kept in contact up until recently with Mr Wylie but, aside from that, he has no corporate or any connection to our company, aside from what I have told you. That is all the information there is.

With respect to Facebook, until I was provided the document that Mr Collins referred to earlier, I had not seen what they meant when they said "administration connections". I did see just a short time ago, before I came in the room, what they were suggesting those administration connections were. We did do advertising work for SCL and that is what that seems to describe. That is not inconsistent with what I have said at all because we have done advertising work for them.

Previous to today I did not know what those administrative links were that they were describing. In the context of Facebook, I do not know what an administrative link is.



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Q3117 **Jo Stevens:** Going back to the datasets that we have talked about and the customer audiences. You said you are going to go away and investigate that to see if you can find out any more.

Jeff Silvester: I will share that information with you.

Q3118 **Jo Stevens:** Do you have to go into Facebook to do that? How are you doing to do that?

Jeff Silvester: That would be most helpful if I could. I do not have access to Facebook at present, however I am going to look back to see any of the notes from any of our staff with respect to the work that they were doing and look at the communications that came from the campaigns. We do not have the information now but we do have some information in terms of the directions that they provided us at different times, which I can look at. I will see if any of that leads me to find if there is any evidence anywhere that somehow information was mixed. To date I have not seen anything like that but I am happy to look deeper.

I have done a very comprehensive investigation because I have answered these questions to our Privacy Commissioner in British Columbia. But I will look again specifically with respect to these audiences, and that gives me something to look at in more detail. I will report back and if there is some information then I will have to report that as well to the Privacy Commissioner of British Columbia because he has asked me questions about that. I will let you know and of course the Electoral Commissioner here in the UK.

Q3119 **Chair:** A few more questions to wrap up. On the referendum: how many AIQ employees worked on the referendum campaign?

Jeff Silvester: At the time—contract employees and full-time employees—there were around 20 people altogether. Not all of them worked on the campaign; 10 to 15. I do not know exactly but I can find out and I can get you that number.

Q3120 **Chair:** How many of those contractors or employers were based in the UK?

Jeff Silvester: We had people come over from time to time but the work got done in Victoria.

Q3121 **Chair:** Did you have to recruit people at short notice to your team?

Jeff Silvester: Specifically for that referendum?

Chair: Yes.

Jeff Silvester: No. There are folks that we use regularly. There is a lot of ebb and flow to campaigns so when we have a large advertising campaign there are people who we know who we use regularly as a contract employee to do the work. So we did engage some of those during that time.



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Q3122 **Chair:** Given your previous work, did any of those contractors you use also work for SCL?

Jeff Silvester: Do you mean did they do work for us during advertising for SCL? Not directly, they certainly did not work directly but they did do work on some of the advertising campaigns in the past that we did for SCL, yes.

Chair: But were they working on other projects for SCL?

Jeff Silvester: No, by the time we were doing advertising for Vote Leave, which started much earlier than any of the others, the advertising work we had done for SCL had stopped.

Q3123 **Chair:** So the contractors and employees you used they only work in advertising?

Jeff Silvester: We have some who are IT professionals and some who are advertising professionals.

Q3124 **Chair:** Looking at the whole set—IT professionals and outsourcing people who are contractors you use—are they also working with SCL on other projects?

Jeff Silvester: No.

Q3125 **Chair:** Not at the same time but either before or after?

Jeff Silvester: No, the only work that they ever would have done in relation to SCL or any SCL group related company would have been through us. None of them have done any direct work for them at all.

Q3126 **Chair:** Are they people who are based in Victoria?

Jeff Silvester: Yes.

Q3127 **Christian Matheson:** I am reflecting on your evidence this afternoon and it strikes me there are only three possibilities here. First, it has not been a problem, there is nothing to see, move along. The second two are both there is a problem, which may well be unlawful sharing of data, use of data that has been unlawfully acquired or stored, possible breaking of UK electoral law. Of that second one, there is either the possibility that you are an innocent techie that has been used by highly politicised people running sophisticated political campaigns and you have been caught in the middle of it. Or that you have been part of the activities as well. There are only those three possibilities that I can think of. Which is it?

Jeff Silvester: Your first is?

Christian Matheson: There is no problem at all.

Jeff Silvester: There is no problem at all.

Christian Matheson: There is no problem with data, there is no problem with electoral law, nothing to see. The second is that there is a problem,



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that you are the technical expert and were not aware of the finer points of UK electoral law or UK data law. The third possibility is that there is a problem and, as somebody who is running the company, you would have been aware of some of these but went ahead and did it anyway.

Jeff Silvester: From what I have told you today—and what I know to be true—and from all the information that I have, I have not seen any evidence that we have deliberately done anything untoward. With respect to your first part that there is nothing to see here: certainly there are things that are worth looking into with respect to data privacy and everything that the ICO and the Electoral Commission is doing good work on. I do not want to say “nothing to see here” but they are doing their work and we are going to co-operate as best we can to help them do that work.

To your other two comments about if there was something wrong—

Christian Matheson: Not comment, possibilities.

Jeff Silvester: Unwittingly possibly or that we were somehow part of it, as I have mentioned, we have not seen any evidence of that.

Q3128 **Christian Matheson:** You might have been hoodwinked, conned, manipulated, used?

Jeff Silvester: I don't think we have been manipulated but as a vendor we do not see the total innerworkings of all the campaigns we work with. We do the work that we—

Q3129 **Christian Matheson:** You do because you saw the advert from Nigeria and decided that from now on you would be taking a lot more of a close look at the content of the campaigns.

Jeff Silvester: With respect to advertising, we always see the content because we are the ones that have to place it in the end. But that is not necessarily innerworkings of a campaign and the strategy and all the discussions that go on about that. We only know the part that we are working on. I don't think there has been anything untoward.

Q3130 **Chair:** What is Osnova AggregateIQ?

Jeff Silvester: Osnova is a political party in the Ukraine.

Q3131 **Chair:** Are you working on the Ukraine elections next year?

Jeff Silvester: We have a client that we created an android and IOS app for, and they are working with Osnova.

Q3132 **Chair:** A couple of other questions to finish up, largely on some things Chris Vickery spoke to us about. One was your relationship with other advertising networks, maybe to run or replace online ads through. They are companies such as easyAd, Adreach Network, and EZ-AD AG in Holland, could you just say a little bit about your relationship with this companies and the sort of work you do with them?



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Jeff Silvester: Adreach is a company in Victoria. They are folks that we work with frequently to run ads. What was the other?

Chair: EZ-AD AG, which I think is based in Holland, and easyAd.

Jeff Silvester: We have never done work for those companies. Where Mr Vickery might be making a reference to is there was a company somewhere called EZ-AD.org or something like that. The domain came available and one of our developers purchased it for his own personal use, but we did not do any work with either of those companies.

Q3133 **Chair:** All Mr Vickery has told us is with EZ-AD AG there is active a request for advertising that is coming from that. He has been pinged to it from a Russian IP link to the Alpha Group in Russia, and there is a constant request being made.

Jeff Silvester: I am not aware of any of that. I don't think we have done any work with them. I can triple check to see if in some way at some time we used them to run an ad on a mobile network or something like that. But I have not seen any invoices from them or anything like that. I would see that if we had to pay them money for something. I have not seen any evidence that our company has done any work with them at any time. I see every contract so I would have seen that. But I do know that one of our staff on his own accord registered a domain with EZ-AD at some place in there. I do not know if Mr Vickery is referring to that. I don't know if SCL has used them or not. I don't know.

Q3134 **Chair:** Mr Vickery has also told us that there are files within the GitLab relating to the development of cryptocurrency. Is that something that AggregateIQ has been involved in?

Jeff Silvester: Yes. We did some development for a client of ours, who was looking for some work on creating what is called a token. A token is something based on the blockchain technology that allows you to—in this case they were looking to raise money for a project they were working on. We created the website for them, and this is based on the Ethereum network, which is one of the cryptocurrency networks. We created the technology, it is called a contract—although not like a business contract but an Ethereum contract—in order to allow people to purchase a token, and that would transfer cryptocurrency to this company we were working for.

We have not launched that project yet. We finished the website and we created the contract for testing. We did do some testing on the Ethereum test network but we have not launched it. The company in question is right now looking with their lawyers at the regulations in British Columbia for the Securities Commission and the US Federal Securities Commission.

Q3135 **Chair:** This is the Midas token?

Jeff Silvester: Yes, and it is important to note it is "the Midas token". When we saw Mr Vickery's testimony about there being transactions we



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looked online, because the Ethereum network is very public. You can see exactly the transactions. There is another token out there that is nothing to do with us called "the Midas Touch". That token is live on the Ethereum network but ours is not live yet.

Q3136 **Chair:** Mr Vickery said that as far as he is concerned the token had launched, the timer on the site had gone down to zero and is on a live site. You are saying that does not relate to the Midas token?

Jeff Silvester: I don't know exactly what he saw with respect to the token, so I can only speculate. The website timer was zero but that was just an arbitrary time we put in for the development of the website to show the countdown timer for whenever they wanted to launch. We have not launched that token yet. I would know because I am the one that has to authorise that. We did do test transactions, he could have seen that because it is public, and there is another token that has Midas in its name that has done real transactions not related to us. I can say with 100% certainty that we have not launched that project. The company we are working with is looking at the BC Securities and Federal Securities Commissions information in the US and British Columbia.

Q3137 **Chair:** You mentioned Osnova earlier on. What were your instruction to the Osnova Party in the Ukraine?

Jeff Silvester: I have not talked to them directly. Our client came to us and asked us to make an android and IOS app to use for that.

Q3138 **Chair:** There is a web address.

Jeff Silvester: Correct.

Q3139 **Chair:** A holding page that you go to if you go on that web address.

Jeff Silvester: Yes. When we do work for clients for their client our contact is all with our particular client; in this case out of the US. They are the ones with the interactions with the client in the Ukraine.

Q3140 **Chair:** So you have a client in the US who is asking you to do work for a client of theirs in the Ukraine?

Jeff Silvester: We have done some software work for them and they sell their software that we create for them to whomever they like. We just simply support that work.

Q3141 **Chair:** But will you be involved in a campaign or are you just—

Jeff Silvester: I don't expect so, no. If they asked us to do online advertising, which I doubt they would, maybe but I expect that the extent of the work we do will be for our client in the US, and it is just working on the app and keeping it up to date and that sort of thing.

Q3142 **Chair:** Does Osnova have any links to any other political parties in Canada?



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Jeff Silvester: Not to my knowledge but I have never spoken to them directly.

Q3143 **Ian C. Lucas:** Do you have any clients from Russia?

Jeff Silvester: No, no clients from Russia.

Q3144 **Chair:** Mr Silvester, thank you very much for your time and for answering our questions today. We will follow up with a note to summarise the requests we have made for other documents and information you have agreed to give so we have a clear—

Jeff Silvester: Yes, I have made a few notes. I will go back through the—when do you publish the testimony from this in terms of—

Chair: It will probably be next week.

Jeff Silvester: I will be back in my office on Tuesday. It is a public holiday on Monday, but as soon as I can get that I will go through and we will communicate back to make sure we have everything you want. I will do my best to get this as soon as I can. Some of it might take longer, like that information from Facebook because I will reach out to them directly to see if they can give me additional information, and then I will be in touch.

Chair: I am advised by the clerks it could be as early as tomorrow. What we will do is as well as being on the website we can send you a copy of the transcript as well so you have it.

Jeff Silvester: I will be flying.

Q3145 **Chair:** I appreciate the fact that we have no jurisdictional powers over you, we have no power to summons you, and you have chosen to come here and give evidence to this Committee and we are grateful for that. I wish it was as easy to get other people that are similarly part of these investigations to give testimony in the way that you have.

Jeff Silvester: I understand you are looking for certain people to come and it has been difficult for you to get those people, but we are happy to come and share information. I am particularly appreciative of you sharing the information with me about the Electoral Commission and I will look into that. Down the road it does not require a visit from us to give you information. You have our contact information with the clerk, so happy to get that information for you as best we can.

Chair: Thank you very much.



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