

PANELLISTS DISCUSS MAKE-UP AND ROLE OF MODERN FAMILIES

Families valued at debate

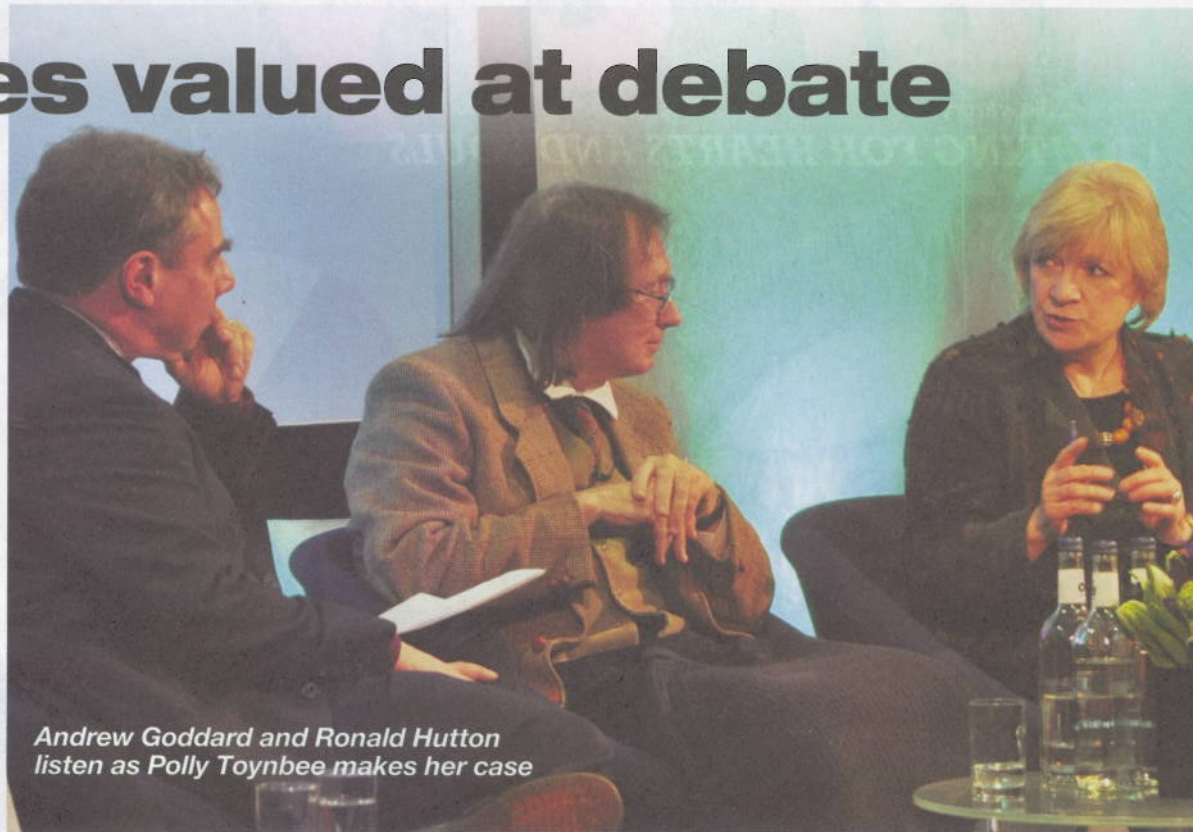
MOST people in the UK think of the family as primarily a biological unit, according to research carried out for the Westminster Faith Debates.

A YouGov survey found that almost everyone agreed that a married couple with children was a family. Most people also agreed that an unmarried couple with children constituted a family (89 per cent), as did a lone parent with at least one child (87 per cent).

The survey also found that sizeable portions of the population based their view of the family on emotional ties or cohabitation. An unmarried couple without children was thought to be a family by 52 per cent of respondents and a same-sex couple in a civil partnership was considered a family by 47 per cent of people.

The results of the survey were published to coincide with a Westminster Faith Debate on families.

At the debate, Rosalind Edwards, Professor of



Andrew Goddard and Ronald Hutton listen as Polly Toynbee makes her case

Sociology at the University of Southampton, said that 'most people still value family life' even if its form is changing.

History professor Ronald Hutton of Bristol University argued that Christian morality was 'a lot harder to fit the reality' of modern life's increased

life expectancies and 'unprecedented pressures'.

Christian ethicist Andrew Goddard said that the traditional family 'provides a structure which stresses the importance of continuity, commitment, security, stability, love and sacrifice for the good of others'. He suggested that the UK was 'odd among developed countries in having no recognition of marriage in the tax system'.

Guardian journalist and former president of the British Humanist Association Polly Toynbee argued that the family remains an ideal because

'we know from social research that very happy families are very good for children'.

But she said that a bonus for marriage in the tax system would be ineffectual because it is 'an entirely ludicrous idea that a hundred or even a couple of hundred pounds a year is going to make people get

married or stay married when we know that getting divorced at personal cost to themselves

She said that the while unable to support families by paying mediation services, increasing benefit cuts, providing affordable childcare and paying good wages.

Becoming a Christian

The... to becoming a Christian.