

## Letters to the Editor



### Engage with multiculturalism

Sir, I am vicar of a church that has Sunday services in two Asian languages, as well as in English. This modest experiment in multiculturalism can never be characterised as either failing or succeeding; rather it requires constant attention and adjustment, both to find ways to express our cross-cultural unity as brothers and sisters in Christ, and yet also to allow people's different cultural identities to be affirmed and to flourish (report, Feb 5). The task is both fulfilling and frustrating, as well as never-ending.

Talk of multiculturalism "failing" (also "succeeding") is remote from the reality of those who relate closely to multicultural communities. It is legitimate to argue that in particular respects we have over-affirmed diversity at the expense of unity and that correctives need to be made. But we need to recognise the value of supporting separate identities. Rhetoric either for or against multiculturalism is a dangerous short-cut that avoids the essential need for close engagement with people who are different from us.

THE REV PREB JOHN ROOT  
Vicar of St James, Alperton, Middx

### Farewell, family law

Sir, The head of the family court, Sir Nicholas Wall, is quite right in highlighting the dangers associated with cuts to family legal aid (report, Law, Feb 10). Not only will each family law case take longer if the parties are not represented, but there will also likely be more cases, since lawyers currently filter cases before they reach courts. Family solicitors and barristers are skilled in managing the expectations of their clients, helping them to see what the court can and cannot do. They also successfully negotiate the vast majority of cases without going near a court.

However, there is a further, long-term risk associated with legal aid cuts to family law cases, because the established expertise of family lawyers will be lost. Mid-career and early career lawyers will stop doing family work if they are not funded. Consequently, in a very short space of time, there will be no body of experience in complex and important cases involving allegations of child abuse, disputes between parents, or property cases on divorce. Once the critical mass of the collegiate family law profession is lost, it will be gone forever.

Lawyers who leave family law to do other kinds of work will not come back, and the outstanding value provided by the committed and able people who do this difficult work will be gone. These long-term risks are crucial, and must be highlighted before it is too late.

DR ROBERT GEORGE  
Senior Law Tutor  
Jesus College, Oxford

### EU students wanted

Sir, I am a second-class passenger on the Brussels "gravy train" ("Wanted: more British graduates to join the Brussels 'gravy train'," Feb 7); my late husband, Sir Roy Denman, was a senior British civil servant who transferred to the European Commission. Recently, in Brussels, his retired Commission contemporaries (Belgian and German) movingly told me what a great and positive effect had been made by the first intake of British civil servants to the Commission.

Later I visited the Bruges campus of the College of Europe — the best preparatory school for the "concours" and EU-related careers. This year, following a reduction in UK government funding for scholarships, there are only 13 UK-based students (and not all of them are British) out of a total student body of 438. On the other hand, there are 57 Italians and 49 French, 33 Poles, and we are even outnumbered by 14 Ukrainians. Government support next year will be restricted to existing civil servants. The smaller the national group, the weaker its cultural influence, I was told by a regretful recruitment officer.

Wringing our hands over the iniquities of the EU is of precious little use. This country is a member of the EU, and it might be sensible to learn to play up and play the game. For my part, I am using some of my pension to found the Bruges-Natolin UK European Scholarships Fund, and the first Denman scholar should be at the College of Europe in October.

MOYA DENMAN  
London SW3