

# ROSS PARISH ESSAY COMPETITION

*Have two hundred years of liberal capitalism made us any happier?*

**T**he annual Ross Parish Essay Competition, open to young people aged eighteen to thirty, was named for Professor Ross Parish (1929–2001), one of the longest-serving members of the CIS Council of Academic Advisors and the CIS Research Director for several years.

For 2007, competition entrants were asked, ‘Have two hundred years of liberal capitalism made us any happier?’ The question was prompted by renewed intellectual interest in happiness, much of it arguing that capitalist society is bad for well-being. The argument has many threads: some of the common claims are that materialist attitudes foster discontent, that we neglect family and friends to become richer, that too much choice causes stress, and that income inequality causes illness.

Comparisons with two hundred years ago proved difficult; empirical happiness research goes back only to the 1940s. But entrants to the essay competition did write well about what social conditions contribute to happiness, and if and how we should measure it. The first prize went to Stephen Whittington from Wellington in New Zealand, and the second prize went to Kim Anderson, who studied in Adelaide before moving to Melbourne.

