

# Enclosing the state for private gain

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As [I've mentioned already this morning](#), I am spending much of today in Norwich. One reason why is that today marks the [anniversary of the death of Robert Kett](#) who led a rebellion against enclosure in 1549.

Kett died for his concern. And yet what troubled him then should trouble us now. I wrote most of the [rest of this blog last year](#), but it remains just as relevant today:

Those with blind faith in private enterprise say it solves all our problems. And generates all wealth.

I don't agree. If it did I do not believe its supporters would need to take control of parliament to ensure they can capture the public sector to deliver wealth to their friends.

Two hundred (and more) years or so ago this process involved seizing land because the private sector could not work out how to generate wealth for itself before the coming of railways. As Wikipedia notes:

*Enclosure is the process which was used to end some traditional rights, such as [mowing meadows](#) for [hay](#), or [grazing livestock](#) on land which is owned by another person, or a group of people. In [England and Wales](#) the term is also used for the process that ended the ancient system of [arable farming](#) in [open fields](#). Under enclosure, such land is fenced (*enclosed*) and *deeded* or *entitled* to one or more owners. By the 20th century, unenclosed commons had become largely restricted to rough pasture in mountainous areas and in relatively small parts of the lowlands.*

The process of enclosure has sometimes been accompanied by force, resistance, and bloodshed, and remains among the most controversial areas of [agricultural and economic history](#) in England. [Marxist and neo-Marxist historians](#) argue that rich landowners used their control of state processes to appropriate public land for their private benefit. This created a landless [working class](#) that provided the labour required in the new industries developing in the [north of England](#). For example: "In agriculture the years between 1760 and 1820 are the years of wholesale enclosure in which, in

*village after village, common rights are lost".[\[1\]](#)*

I'm surprised the author thought you had to be a Marxist to think that: it seems pretty much universally accepted that this is what happened at the time.

This process is, I suggest, happening again. Private enterprise has no clue how to generate wealth right now. I [mentioned the consequence](#) a while ago. Private business has no idea what to invest in now, no new product to make, no big idea to offer. That's why it is sitting on a massive pile of cash.

*So this government is offering it the NHS, education and more so that public benefit can be enclosed for private gain.*

*This is what happened two hundred years ago.*

*And it's happening again.*

*And the goal is simple: that the single largest income stream in the country - tax revenue - be washed through privatised structures to deliver private gain rather than the common good.*

*Kett fought for the common good.*

*So should we.*