

The ambition to serve

Published: January 15, 2026, 1:16 pm

I love this opening paragraph from George Monbiot in The Guardian today:

It is hard to believe today, but the prevailing ethos among the educated elite was once public service. As the historian Tony Judt documented in [All Fares the Land](#), the foremost ambition among graduates in the 1950s and 60s was, through government or the liberal professions, to serve their country. Their approach might have been patrician and often blinkered, but their intentions were mostly public and civic, not private and pecuniary.

Great book from Tony Judt.

The sentiment is correct.

George's writing is good.

I have enormous sympathy with what he says in the rest of the article.

And he's right: it all went wrong due to economist promoted greed, at cost to us all.