

Global energy crisis: then and now



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The world today faces an energy crisis. The world is dependent on certain natural resources like oil and natural gas that are quickly depleting. These resources are being imported from countries that have the ability to set higher prices due to demand (Nef 1977). Because of this, the world faces a great recession, and like Britain in the second half of the 16th century, we need to find alternative sources of energy. Britain found itself in an energy crisis and was on the brink of a recession however they were able to exploit a new means of energy and revitalize their country and situation.

The purpose of this paper is to show similarities between Britain's Energy crisis of the 16th century and our Global energy crisis of today, with the hopes to learn from Britain to solve our current global issues. Argument Claim In today's Global energy crisis, we find ourselves dependent on wood, as did Britain. Based on the reading from " An Early Energy Crisis and its Consequences" (Nef 1977), Britain in the second half of the 16th century had its first energy crisis due to deforestation. The country had a large supply of forest, and was greatly dependent of wood for everything.

They used it for building homes and furniture among many other things. The government regulated the use of wood as it used it for building there ships, which was used for everything from there Navy to transportation (Nef 1977). With the rise in population came the rise in more materials, and wood was being quickly used up. Books became very popular with the creation of the printing press, and wood was used for making paper (Nef 1977). Furthermore, with the discovery of metal ores, great amounts of wood were needed to heat the metal to manufacture items such as weapons (Nef 1977).

Wood quickly became scarce, and Britain was on the brink of Deforestation. Britain found itself dealing with higher prices of wood greatly rising, and also having to import wood from other countries. According to “ An Early Energy Crisis and its Consequences” (Nef 1977), the period of 1550 to 1640 was a time of inflation throughout Europe, the price of wood rose very much faster than that of any other commodity in general use anywhere. Complaints of deforestation came from all parts of the kingdom.

This hurt the Britain economy and way of life as Britain was forced to find other materials for energy, and started using coal as a resource (Nef 1977). Using coal revitalized the economy and the necessity of use created many new inventions and opportunities for the country, and ultimately the world. Like Britain, many countries of today’s world are dependent on wood also. Countries still use wood as a means of building and for heat. Wood is also cut and exported as a means of revenue and like Britain, the United States and other countries are now faced with deforestation (Nef 1977).

The data compiled by the World Preservation Foundation (WPF, 2010), reveals that the planet has already lost 80 percent of its forest due to deforestation, and going by the alarming rate at which the trees are cut, it will not take much time for that figure to reach the 100 percent mark (Nef 1977). In the same way Britain was forced to find other alternatives, the United States and other countries must expand their resources and find new ways. With Britain fighting the effects of deforestation, they had to find another source of energy.

Coal had been discovered, but was not used much. Coal miners were looked down upon because the work was dirty and it turned the men black, and

many thought of them as the black race (Nef 1977). Many people also thought of mining as the raping of the earth (Nef 1977). New advancements were made in the mining industry and as people learned about and saw the benefits of coal, a new dignity was given to mining. With this new energy source came new opportunities. New inventions were discovered and new ways of processing metals had been discovered.

This new fuel source revitalized a nation and spurred technological development. New environmental ways of dealing with the black coal were developed. According to “ An Early Energy Crisis and its Consequences” (Nef 1977), coal had been so successfully incorporated into British technology and economy that during the last four decades of the 17th century wood prices stopped rising. Today’s Global energy has seen the same similar effects. Most countries use oil and oil products as a large fuel source.

The invention of machines, cars, engines, lubricants all use this resource; the world relies on oil. Similar to Britain and their issue with running out of trees to harvest, the United States and other countries is now globally are hitting their oil peak (Planet for Life, 2008). According to “ Global Oil Crisis” (Planet for Life, 2008), the problem is oil production. Very little oil has been found within the past 30 years and the prospect of finding much more is dim and it is not for lack of looking (Planet for Life, 2008).

Obviously, oil must be found before it can be produced and some of the world's oil producing regions is already experiencing steep declines (Planet for Life, 2008). It happened in the US in 1971 and it happened in the North Sea in 1999 (Planet for Life, 2008). It also happened in Mexico in 2006 (Planet for Life, 2008). Oil production in the Middle East and the Russian

Federation has not yet peaked, but it will eventually as did Britain, the current world is under pressure to find new resources. Conclusion

Britain of the 16th and 17th century faced many of the same type of Energy crisis as the current world does today. The scarcity of dependent resources has made Britain of then, and the world of now find and invent new ways and resources to keep prosperous. And like then, with the discovery of new energy sources, there will come the invention of new technologies. The World may be able to prevent deforestation and also help in the prevention of the drainage of the world of oil resources. Hopefully the world of today can learn from Britain of then.