

British industrialization



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British Industrialization Industrialization in Britain was a long, slow, and uneven process. Economic historians the beginning of what has become known as the " Industrial Revolution" in 1800s where the process of changing to mechanized, factory-based industrial economy was completed. Its impact on the population and existing way of life were drastically experienced from this period until the 1900s. According to Stuart Hall et al., the changes involved were so momentous that their shadow fell across the lives even of those who were not directly affected. (p. 133)

One of the major results of industrialization was the dramatic growth of the British population as a whole. Historians have pointed in great detail the changes which occurred in the heights of British population since the 1800s to the improvement in the standard of living of the whole population and groups within it. This is mainly because welfare of the population reflected the ability to produce both agricultural goods on which it can feed and the industrial goods and services which it can sell. Between 1750 and 1850, the population of England and Wales virtually trebled, rising from about 6.5 to about 18 million as the population rose at the rate of 10 percent each decade. (Hall et al., 133)

Another result of industrialization which worked in tandem with population growth was the growth of cities. In 1750, there were only two cities in Britain with a population of over 50,000 inhabitants - London and Edinburgh - but by 1801 there would be eight of such cities and by 1851, twenty-nine. (Hall et al. 1996, 133) People, especially displaced agricultural workers, naturally trooped to the cities with its increased opportunities for work. In slightly over one hundred years, the urbanism moved through a cycle of expansion, restructuring and decline, driven by shifts in the capitalist economy and by <https://assignbuster.com/british-industrialization/>

changing sources of power. Large-scale industry moved along with steam engines into an array of British cities. Manufacturing cities first reaped the benefits of industrial growth because they captured a major share of capital investment.

Monumental factories sprang up everywhere to house the huge stationary engines and machines. The new urban working class was relegated to the role of machine minders. Cities were bursting to the seams. For instance, the population in Liverpool reached a density of 3000 people per hectare – people lived anywhere they could, even cellars were packed full. (Girardet & N'Dow, 50)

With this kind of urban development came some consequences as well. There came gross overcrowding and the hasty erection of cheap housing. The work of Dickens and other nineteenth-century novelists give us some glimpse of the terrible conditions that resulted: thousands of people lived in filth, disease, and penury. The new industries, for instance, blanketed cities with acrid smoke and they became breeding grounds for bronchitis and tuberculosis.

For the first time, masses of people in Britain experienced tremendous increase as well as urban life with its benefits of industrial development and on the one hand its consequences. The process was arduous but the late 1700s through the late 1800s laid the foundation of the subdivision of the labor force – with the application of steam engine and machinery – a key feature of industrial organization that would transform and energize Britain into a new economy.

Bibliography

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