

**Economics 201Y1: Economic History of Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe**

**Topic No. 18: On the Industrial ‘Origins’ of the Industrial Revolution: The Nef Thesis on Industrial Change in Tudor-Stuart England**

- \*\* 1. John U. Nef, ‘The Progress of Technology and the Growth of Large-Scale Industry in Great Britain, 1540-1640,’ Economic History Review, 1st ser. 5 (1934); and his ‘Prices and Industrial Capitalism in France and England, 1540-1640,’ Economic History Review, 1st ser. 7 (1937), both reprinted in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed. Essays in Economic History, Vol. I (1954), pp. 88-107, and 108-34.
  - \* 2. D.C. Coleman, Industry in Tudor and Stuart England (1975), pp. 35-49; and his The Economy of England, 1450-1750 (1977), pp. 82-90, 165-72. A major critic of the Nef thesis.
  - 3. D.C. Coleman, ‘Industrial Growth and Industrial Revolutions,’ Economica, new ser. 23 (1956), reprinted in: E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed. Essays in Economic History, Vol. III (1962), pp. 334-52.
  - \* 4. Sybil Jack, Trade and Industry in Tudor and Stuart England (London, 1977), especially chapter 2, pp. 66-121. A very severe critic of the Nef thesis.
  - \* 5. L. A. Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy in England, 1500-1750 (London, 1971), chapter 4, ‘Industry,’ pp. 75-116. A more balanced approach.
  - 6. Peter Ramsey, Tudor Economic Problems (London, 1965), Chapter III: ‘Industry and the Towns,’ pp. 82-112.
  - 7. D.W. Crossley, ‘The Performance of the Glass Industry in Sixteenth-Century England,’ Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 25 (1972), 421-33. Very important study.
- The Debate about the English Iron Industry in the 17th Century:
- \* 8. T.S. Ashton, Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution (Manchester, 1924; reprinted 1951), chapter 1, pp. 1-23. Provided the foundation for this aspect of the Nef thesis.
  - 9. John Nef, Rise of the British Coal Industry (London, 1932), Vol. I, pp. 165-89.
  - \*10. George Hammersley, ‘The Charcoal Iron Industry and its Fuel, 1540-1750,’ Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 26 (1973), 593-613. Chief critic of this aspect of the Nef thesis; but see also Donald Coleman and Sybil Jack, above.
  - \*11. Charles K. Hyde, Technological Change and the British Iron Industry, 1700-1870 (Princeton, 1977), especially chapter 1, pp. 7-22; also chapter 3, pp. 42-52. Modifies Ashton and Nef.
  - 12. Brinley Thomas, ‘Escaping from Constraints: The Industrial Revolution in a Malthusian Context,’ The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 15 (Spring 1985), 729 - 54.

- \*13. Brinley Thomas, 'Was There an Energy Crisis in Great Britain in the 17th Century?' Explorations in Economic History, 33 (April 1986), 124 - 52. Defends the Nef thesis.
14. J. R. Harris, The British Iron Industry, Studies in Economic and Social History series (London: Macmillan, 1988).

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Explain and discuss the Nef thesis: what did he mean by an 'industrial revolution' in the Tudor-Stuart era, during the 'Price Revolution' -- in particular the 'progress towards larger-scale forms of industrial capitalism?' To what extent did industrial changes alter the general economic structure of Tudor-Stuart England? Were they 'revolutionary'?
2. Did Tudor-Stuart England suffer from an 'energy crisis'? What impact did rising fuel costs have upon charcoal-burning and coal-burning industries: upon technology and industrial scale?
3. Explain the development of a 'capitalistic' iron industry in this era: in particular, the two-stage process involving the blast smelter. Did the English iron industry, after having experienced a century of rapid growth, suffer stagnation and/or decline in the later 17th and early 18th centuries? What was the subsequent Industrial Revolution in iron-making?