

The Great Toilet Paper Shortage of 1973: Panic, Hoarding, and Empty Shelves

By Melkisedeck Leon Shine · July 3, 2023

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? October 18, 1973: The world stood on the brink of chaos as panic, hoarding, and empty shelves swept across nations during what would be forever known as "The Great Toilet Paper Shortage of 1973." ?

? It all began on that fateful day when the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) declared an oil embargo on the United States and other nations supporting Israel during the Yom Kippur War. This decision sent shockwaves through the global economy, triggering a domino effect that would reach even the most intimate aspects of people's daily lives.

? As gas prices soared, the public's fear of an impending economic crisis grew exponentially. However, it was an unforeseen consequence that would grip the world in a peculiar frenzy. On November 6, 1973, an article titled "The Perilous Future of Toilet Paper" was published in a renowned newspaper, sparking widespread anxiety about a potential shortage. ?

? The following day, grocery stores were inundated with customers feverishly searching for rolls of toilet paper, as if the fate of humanity depended on it. Shelves emptied at an astonishing rate, leaving behind nothing but echoes of what once stood. ?

? The United States government, recognizing the threat to societal stability, sprang into action. President Richard Nixon, in an unprecedented move, announced the creation of the National Toilet Paper Reserve, a stockpile of bathroom tissue to alleviate the crisis. This measure was met with mixed reactions, with critics dubbing it the "TP Vault" and others praising it as a necessary step for national security. ?

? Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Europe faced similar turmoil. In the United Kingdom, the Conservative government, led by Prime Minister Edward Heath, introduced strict rationing measures to ensure an equitable distribution of toilet paper. This led to peculiar scenes as families lined up outside stores, armed with ration books, hoping to secure their weekly toilet paper quota. ?

? Not even the far reaches of Australia were spared from the frenzy. In Sydney, long queues formed outside supermarkets, extending for blocks, as Australians joined the worldwide toilet paper craze. Emboldened by the situation, a group of enterprising individuals even organized a black market for rolls of the coveted commodity, selling them at absurdly inflated prices. ?

? As the days turned into weeks, the situation began to stabilize. Governments worldwide worked tirelessly to secure new sources of pulp and negotiate with suppliers to ensure a steady flow of toilet paper. Gradually, the panic and hoarding subsided, and supply chains were restored. ?

? By the end of 1973, the world began to collectively exhale, relieved that the

infamous shortage was finally behind them. The Great Toilet Paper Shortage of 1973 had left an indelible mark on history and taught valuable lessons about the fragility of consumer markets. It became a reminder of the bizarre and unpredictable ways in which global events can impact even the most essential aspects of our lives. ?

And so, as time went on, the tale of the toilet paper craze became a curious anecdote in the annals of human history, whispered in hushed tones, accompanied by laughter, and sealed with a wink. ?

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