

"And what about loose-floating wood? This is still much too frequent. Last year, for instance it happened in Arkhangel'skaya Oblast, where the rivers were seriously polluted by floating wood. Fishing is now a thing of the past there. Many valuable species of fish have left altogether for other areas."

Q. "It seems we are chasing after cubic metres and tonnes. We aim very high and write glowing reports of labour achievements, yet we are unwilling to see the consequences of our thoughtless activity. Is it our pursuit of gross production figures that causes the ecological imbalances to take on such frightening proportions today?"

A. "At first, yes. Whole generations have grown up on the idea that our country's expanses are endless and our natural resources inexhaustible. We should remember the saying: 'Don't expect charity from nature'. We took endlessly from nature, forgetting that one day we would have to pay for it."

"I recall a trip I made to the United States in 1970 where I had the opportunity to learn about the situation in the pulp-and-paper industry and other branches of the timber-processing industry. At the time, 30-35% of capital investment was already being directed towards nature conservation measures. In the Soviet Union the figure was only 7%. It is now up to 10-12%, but the increase is not very large."

"However, the fault does not lie entirely in our limited financial assets. The idea that our vast natural resources can stand anything is firmly rooted in the minds of the policy-makers and those lower down the ladder. Managers and party officials alike