

TIMBER AND WOODWORKING

Only Half of the Cross-Ties Produced Annually Go to Ministry of Railways

I was recently on detached duty in Krasnoyarsk. The purpose of my visit was to obtain as many cross-ties as possible for track maintenance work. I have no hesitation in saying that it proved impossible to cope with the task in full. Here is why.

It turns out that of the 40,000,000 cross-ties which the Ministry of the Timber Industry manufactures, only 40 to 50 per cent go to the railway workers. The rest are sent to dozens or even hundreds of other consumers drawn from virtually every sector of the economy.

At first glance such a sharing of cross-ties of which there is currently an acute shortage is justified, for many establishments and enterprises have spur lines requiring constant upkeep. But it has also become apparent that many of these latter consumers are not using the ties for the intended purpose. Quite often, after sawing them into planks they let them go for housing construction and the like. Meanwhile, our track maintenance personnel on the Tselinnaya Railway alone have fallen behind on capital repairs to the extent of 120 kilometres of main line. Numerous mechanised track repair stations are left without work for weeks on end. And all of this because of a deficit of cross-ties.

In the past year, for example, our railway should have received 700,000 ties. We only managed to obtain 400,000. How can we continue to exist in this fashion? If this is to be the supply situation in the future, we shall fall hopelessly behind. No one needs to be reminded that this could ultimately render the overall condition of the tracks in such a state that even emergency measures would be to no avail and the railway would simply grind to a halt.