

gravel mixture were dredged up from the bed of the Tom River. The level of the water dropped accordingly, the adjacent fields and meadows dried up and the environment ended up a victim of man's blind will. But those in charge learned an extremely peculiar lesson from the Tom River incident: we've exhausted the Tom so let's start in on the Sob! This was what the Western Siberia government commission opted for.

Now, this solution was presented as a way out of a critical situation, that is, to duplicate the causes of the crisis somewhere else. Then the same thing happened again. After the above-mentioned Public Prosecutor's ban on further ravaging of the Sob, the Ob'-Irtysk Steamship Line alone reckoned its losses as tens of millions of roubles. Almost a thousand men have found themselves more or less unemployed and part of the Line's fleet has become redundant. An extensive social, cultural and communal-services programme has lost its material-resources backup. Freight delivery plans have been disrupted and quite a few economic sanctions are looming on the horizon. Furthermore, construction projects and road-laying work come to a standstill without construction materials. Construction workers are idle. So here we have it, the price which has to be paid for our economic and ecological ignorance, for the absurd pitting of industrial requirements against the laws of nature, for the blind belief that the economic expediency of the moment is the ultimate rationale of effective action. In this particular instance, the thoughtless producer has been paid off in his own coin.

According to the observations of the ichthyologist A. Prokopchuk, who has carried out an environmental inspection from the ichthyological