

"What kind of a mood could we have here?", replied machine operator Ya. Valainis when I enquired of him as to the general state of the collective. "It looks as if we shall be left without work. This is my sixteenth year at the mill."

The fact is that the Sloka paper makers are going through a very difficult time. People are already being laid off at the mill, which is known for its splendid working traditions and stable collective of skilled workers. It is mainly the younger workers who are being let go. Suppose they suddenly close down the enterprise. What then, will it be necessary look for somewhere else? Many people are developing a "suitcase" mentality. It began to be thus early last year, when some of the republic's newspapers and activists of special interest groups took critical aim at the Sloka pulp and paper mill. Their position is clear: the cooking of pulp must cease immediately and production be shut down! This was the decision taken at a session of the executive committee of the Yurmala municipal council, and the mill was ordered to implement it by this April. However, at the January session, when the deputies found out that they had exceeded their authority, a correction was made: not to cease but to suspend pulp production from March 31st, 1989.

What does this mean for the enterprise? In the first place, it will be necessary to shut down not only all pulp production, but also most of the shops and sections of the mill. After all, to produce the planned 90,000 tonnes of paper, the mill cooks pulp from locally obtained timber. Twenty five thousand tonnes of bleached pulp are imported from the Russian SFSR just for the manufacture of punched-card paper.