

It's no wonder, therefore, that no sooner had the new machines shown up at the "Severovostokzoloto" and "Yakutzoloto" enterprises than they literally started cracking. Cracks began appearing in the bogie frames, back axles and mounted equipment; the hydraulic system proved to be unreliable. The average time between failures was 70 running hours instead of 170 hours according to the memorandum of instructions. For the sake of comparison, I will add that the same indicator for imported bulldozers operating here is 337 hours.

Output also leaves much to be desired. In one year the "T-500" moves 320,000 cubic metres of soil, while the "Komatsu" and "Caterpillar" tractors move 423,000 and 461,000 cubic metres, respectively.

Miners could still have reconciled themselves to all these defects and omissions. It was the bulldozer's cost that floored them.

By joint decision of three Union ministries - the USSR Ministry of Tractor and Agricultural Machine Engineering, the USSR Ministry of the Construction, Road, and Municipal Machinery Industries and the USSR Ministry of Ferrous Metallurgy - the wholesale and cost of the new bulldozer was set at 134,000 rubles. It suited the customers. Miners reacted with understanding to an increase in the price of machines from the pilot lot to 327,000 rubles. It was clear that so long as the bulldozer was not going unto quantity production, it would be more expensive to produce.

But the supplier retained this high price for series-produced machines as well. By taking advantage of their monopoly position, producers are now putting consumers in a very difficult position.