

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES

A Description of Living Conditions at Dikson

More often than not of late, we have written about Dikson in rosy terms. We speak of the romance and tell about the polar workers, sailors and pilots as well as the polar bears which sometimes turn up on the outskirts of the town. But we unwittingly forget that there are ordinary people living here who have needs and requirements that are scarcely different from those of the inhabitants of, say, Moscow.

Why am I talking about this all of a sudden? It's because 75 years after the founding of Dikson I suddenly heard unexpected words spoken by a participant in the Soviet-Canadian trans-arctic ski expedition, pastor Laurie Dexter: "You really are happy people because you don't know how poorly you live."

We can partly agree with this and partly disagree. But let's try to figure out what basis he had for reaching such a conclusion. Is everything so satisfactory in this small settlement?

In the main, the people in Dikson are newcomers and are here temporarily. I said "temporarily" and then I thought, "Can we speak this way of those who have been living here for 10, 15 or 20 years?" For example, the head of the hydrographical base, Distinguished Polar Worker of the USSR Vladimir Sergeevich Alekseev, lived in the Arctic for 30 years or so. And there are many like him here. The majority of the people in Dikson have had and raised children and they also live "temporarily" at the edge of the earth.

In the Arctic today one hears more and more frequently regrets about the dismantling of the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route, and sole manager not only of Dikson but of the entire Soviet North. It built housing, had its own aircraft, island-based scientific stations, construction organizations, ships, trading enterprises...