

its fate, as well as on that of the even more powerful "Ural" that is still construction, lies not only with the steamship line collective but also with the Ministry of the Maritime Fleet and the State as a whole. In Murmansk two possible solutions to the problem are being looked at. Mr. Beletskii reported on these. The first solution is to transfer the nuclear fleet to the State budget, and the second is to raise the per-ton tax on cargo transported in the Arctic.

No sooner had these proposals been voiced than emotions heated up in the hall. I. Domakhin, a conference delegate from the nuclear powered "Arktika" pointed out angrily that the nuclear fleet is not the ballast of the steamship line but its greatest asset. Thanks to the "Arktika", a kind of economic Chernobyl was prevented in 1983 when 23 cargo ships were frozen in the ice on the Northern Sea Route and this threatened to shut down the gold fields and the ports of Eastern Siberia, and the very survival of cities and towns in this remote region was put at risk. Domakhin suggested a rapid opening of the Northern Sea Route to foreign ships and the earning of hard currency by having the foreigners pay for their ships to be escorted through the ice. Another opponent of the idea of transferring the nuclear fleet to the State budget was S. Fishov, a delegate from the nuclear powered "Sibir". His main argument was that the 2000 crew members of the nuclear fleet who would lose their jobs with the steamship line would be condemned to the poverty of government support. Just as in fact is happening in public education and public health. And under these conditions, where is the guarantee that the necessary safety of the nuclear fleet would be assured? On the other hand, there were also those who spoke in favour of transferring the nuclear fleet to the State. A. Chernov from the motorship "Kapitan Vodenko", for example, reminded the delegates that the economic might of the steamship line rests with the transport fleet, while all other ships, including the nuclear powered ones, play only a supporting role...

The opponents were definitely in agreement on one thing. Only through the economic autonomy of the steamship line is it possible to achieve a more rational solution to its financial and other problems, including those relating to the nuclear fleet. Beletskii, in particular, clarified the situation regarding opening the Northern Sea Route for