

While this is an attractive idea, what would it mean in practice? An even greater burden would be shouldered by the forester, who would thereby become the sole obstacle on the road to overfellings and plunder of our forest wealth. But not one economically developed country has chosen such a method: neither Sweden nor Canada, the USA or Finland. There, harvesting of timber is carried out by specialised concerns and companies. Here, we have already had the experience of the production association. It is little more than a year since a whole series of krajs and oblasts in the Russian Federation were required to place before the Soviet Government the matter of separating the forest farms (leskhoz) and timber industry enterprises (lespromkhoz), which were merged in 1988. Why do we need to repeat an experience which we already know from bitter lessons to have been a mistake?

The situation arising from the Chernobyl' disaster has become more complicated. A fifth of the total area of the general forest lands administered by the State has become polluted by radionuclides. This amounts to hundreds of thousands of forested hectares. Even though thousands of workers in the forest protection service are offering their services, in many of the leskhozy there has been no curtailment of industrial production. It is high time we resolved the question of setting up a unified radiological service which would coordinate the securing of safe working conditions, housing construction and reequipping with materials. We have brought all of this to the attention of the Belorussian Council of Ministers and the USSR State Committee for Forests (Goskomles SSSR), but unfortunately these authorities are slow to reply.

In conclusion, a few words about the shortage of commercially valuable timber. Our sawtimber is seven to eight times cheaper than in the developed countries. There is not enough of it, so by every kind of truth and untruth the departments are striving to achieve overfellings of allowable cuts. It is time that we finally brought this under strict control. For this reason the ministry has placed a proposal before the USSR State Committee for Forests for a reduction in the size of the fellings for principal use from 6.2 to 5.6 million cubic metres beginning in 1991.