

The hydraulic engineers' plans are only the most "glaring" colours in an overall alarming picture. In the territorial centre, the Kacha River flows into the Yenisei. Within my memory this was a merry and beautiful forest river. But in its upper reaches the trees were cut down to supply a glass works with firewood. They spared neither the shore area nor the beaver sanctuary. Bulldozers obliterated everything. A river cannot live without the forest. Today the Kacha is nothing more than a sewer.

The same thing occurred with the taiga beauty, the Mana River. Twenty years ago, the Executive Committee of the Territorial Soviet of People's Deputies prohibited stream driving of timber along this river. A decision was taken - and happily forgotten. Stream driving continues to this day. The river was transformed into a peculiar "log depository" - clogged from top to bottom with tree stems, which are then carried out to the Yenisei.

Once on the Angara, I asked workers at a logging and timber distribution establishment what height increment they worked with. Did they restore sections subject to illegal felling. They were astonished. This was not their responsibility. A most flagrant, in my view, government-scale error. Mighty logging and timber distribution establishments armed with powerful equipment are destroying the taiga at a rapid pace. And we entrust its restoration to half-deserted state forestry establishments, where equipment can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Whence the indifference? I think one of the reasons lies in our passion for gigantomania, from which we have suffered for a long time. Grandiose