

to clear all the timber from the bed of the power station's reservoir on the Angara River. But in August, standing at the base of the unfinished dam in Kodinsk, Minister Yu. Semenov declared that his ministry was categorically opposed to this timber clearing operation. And so, at the will of this all-powerful government body, we're again faced with the flooding of tens of thousands of hectares of Siberian taiga, the destruction of millions of cubic metres of timber...

As I listened to Vera Vasilevna I thought about my own recent trip on the Angara. As the "Zarya" passed through the locks at the still unfinished dam on its way up to Kezhma, I caught glimpses of boundless stands of pines scarred with cut-over areas along both sides of the river.

"We're destroying this resource, too," pensively remarked a chance fellow passenger, a major from the institution that is cutting the forest around the future reservoir. We began to talk. "At the moment we're only taking the 'cream off the top' - the marketable timber. But how much of it rots away in log piles? How much is being pushed through the locks during the shipping season? And now they're already talking about taking all the timber out... The area is mountainous, there aren't any roads. How much in the way of materials, fuel and lubricants and labour will be expended to pile up the trees and brushwood, and to burn them and bury the ashes 2 metres deep? It'll take millions upon millions! And for what? For our own ruin and the devastation of nature? The only sensible alternative is to build facilities for thorough processing of smallwood for furniture and rosin production. This is a gold mine, but for now the orders are: cut more wood! Will there ever be a true steward here?"

The answer to this question came from S. Arinchin, chairman of the krai soviet's permanent Commission on Nature protection, in his remarks before the environmental council. The position of the commission he heads is this: "for the near future no development of hydroelectric power in the krai is acceptable." Such a decisive conclusion is definitely not the fruit of abstract deliberations. Rather, behind these decisions are repeated meetings with Irkutians and Angara region residents, and a close familiarity with the activities of wood-chemistry and chemistry giants discharging roughly 2 billion cubic metres of untreated waste water just in the Irkutsk Oblast alone.