

TRANSPORT - RAIL

Privileges for Wastefulness

The situation on the country's rail lines is extremely tense. The events in Armenia and Azerbaidzhan, summer strikes by miners, and finally the current strike by the Vorkuta miners have led to a colossal demurrage of rolling stock. But while these losses were due to extraordinary and unforeseeable causes, how does one reconcile the massive demurrage of rail cars resulting from obvious irresponsibility and laxity on the part of certain directors who, despite the current acute situation, have done absolutely nothing?

This question was taken up by the Committee for People's Control (CPC) of the Komi ASSR, which was investigating faulty practices at the Syktyvkar station. For years there have been delays here in the unloading of railway cars carrying freight destined for agricultural enterprises. Here are a few examples. Fifty cars loaded with beets for sovkhoses of the republic have arrived since October 25. Some of them turned into virtual warehouses on wheels for weeks. One car bound for the "Sysolski" Sovkhoz awaited unloading for seventeen days. A car delivering beets to the "Ruchevskii" Sovkhoz served as a storehouse for ten days. Workers of the "Spasoporubskii" Sovkhoz dallied with the unloading of peas for twenty-five days.

Over a period of nine months, the total demurrage of train cars bound for agricultural destinations amounted to 22,986 hours. To put it another way, nearly a thousand cars were lost from productivity. The loss from this dead-end demurrage is almost 90,000 rubles, but there is no one to charge the losses to. As it turns out, the receiver of the goods is protected against fines by dint of privileges provided under appropriate articles of the railway regulations.