

In Arkhangel'sk, at the provincial agricultural office, I found out that geological expeditions have taken 5,000 hectares of reindeer pasture out of use in the past few years.

On vast stretches of the Subarctic tundra - in the Nenets Autonomous District - there is intensive prospecting and exploitation of underground resources. It is anticipated that reserves here will equal those discovered in the Tyumen region - a matter crucial to the national economy. But the interests of drillers and extractors are often put above the concerns of agronomy and ecology.

But on the other hand, what can be said for the reindeer industry? It provides the cheapest meat in the country. It costs the Kolguyevskiy State Farm 79 kopecks to produce a kilogram of it. And there is no need to worry about fodder for reindeer.

Consideration is currently being given to displacing the reindeer industry in this insular economy, washed by the waves of the Barents Sea. The reason for this is the callous attitude of "intruders" toward the land and toward the preservation of pasture. On Kolguev Island, the directorate of drilling operations for Arktikmorneftegazorazvedka Industrial Group reported success in starting up oil wells but remained silent about the fact that they were operating with no facilities for water-retention. Thus with one hand we extract the riches, while with the other we destroy nature. And for its subsequent restoration, precious rubles will be needed.

It is surprising that geologists, on whom the government has placed the responsibility to protect mineral resources and underground water, have