

From Documents of the Plenum of the Tyumen Oblast
Committee of the CPSU (January 1990).

"Kuwait produces 75 million tons of oil. They have created excellent living conditions there for their people. Tyumen Oblast, on the other hand, produces almost 400 million tons of oil and 500 billion cubic meters of gas but is totally unable to provide its people with proper housing. There is a shortage of pre-school centers, schools and hospitals. In terms of these indicators the yearly plan has failed. And now the food situation has also worsened sharply.

The oblast occupies first place in many categories with respect to implementation of capital investment, but almost last place in terms of social programs. For example, in the production of consumer goods it has 'successfully' moved from the 65th to the 69th place in the country."

We discussed the problems of the region with Viktor Palii, general director of the Nizhnevartovsk Oil and Gas Association (Nizhnevartovsk neftegaz).

"They call our association a millionaire with an outstretched hand," he said. "A sad joke, but there's a lot of truth in it. Here are some figures. Without them the real issue won't be understood.

"From filling State orders we earn 1 billion 850 million rubles per year. Of this amount almost a billion is paid into the State budget. That leaves 850 million, which would seem to be a lot. But it is not enough to provide food and social programs. Thus, we are forced to ask the government for money - 303 million to be precise. That means we contribute a billion to the country and beg for 300 million. And all the while they tell us: use non-traditional sources of financing. That is, we are supposed to sell something. But what can we sell? We only produce oil.