

When he didn't manage to achieve change through local action, Slyusar' used to write a different official organisations for help. His letters were usually returned to Noyabr'sk. Commissions would arrive and make meticulous enquiries. Usually they supported what he had been saying, but little was ever changed, since plain facts can be interpreted differently, depending where you stand. Vladimir Slyusar' was often overly emotional in the way he couched things and this provided ammunition for those he was criticising to describe him as prejudiced and "painting a black picture". If, for example, the roof was leaking in the workshop, one could simply state the bare bones of the matter by saying what was happening, or one could say that "After a heavy rainfall you need a boat to get around our workshops". The second version is more Slyusar's style. And, no doubt, this sort of "imagery" was greatly offensive to the management. So what would a responsible manager have done? Why of course, he would have had those holes blocked up and that would have been that. But the manager of this particular trust, Mr. L. Petrenko, took offence; he got on his high horse and asked "What have you personally done to stop the roof leaking? Anyone can write a complaint, but a real worker wouldn't write..."

Yet this "real worker" wasn't concerned with the roof in his own apartment, but was trying to get something done about state property. And again he came forward, this time about a certain manager who was breaching financial discipline. This led to criminal proceedings. And again Slyusar' gets it in the neck; this time he's "dishonourable, callous, wouldn't let the man carry on quietly until he retired". It would be a different matter if it had just been women gossiping on their doorsteps, but