

hectares, of which 1,646,000 were forested. The last time we had so many fires was in 1972. This was not only on account of the exceptionally dry weather conditions, but also because the transfer to the new system of remuneration resulted in a reduction in the numbers of people employed in forest fire protection, both on the ground and in the air. We have 20 per cent fewer employees now than formerly. Secondly, we have been operating in a worsening financial environment. Expenditures on aerial protection of the forests have been cut. We are now spending a paltry 11 or 12 kopecks to protect a hectare of forest. This was the summer, moreover, when the timber industry's forestry enterprises were transferred. What has happened is that some of them have already abandoned, at least in part, their involvement in forest fire protection, while others have not yet made a start on this work. The combined effect is that of the 183,000,000 hectares of forest which were transferred to the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry (Minlesprom SSSR), a half were damaged by fire.

"A quarter of all the fires occurred in forests administered by Minlesprom. This marks the first year when, according to official statistics, losses caused by fires exceeded 200 million roubles. But even these figures do not fully reflect the losses to the national economy. If we calculate by the method used at the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (SEV), the losses can be at least doubled."

V. Onyanov (fireman-parachutist from the Western Urals Air Base). "It is unfortunate that ground protection and aerial protection of the forests are administratively distinct. It is only when we notify a forest farm from the air that fire has broken out in a particular compartment that close working contact is established. The chemical fire control stations (CFCSEs) are currently the province of the forest farms and should be made subordinate to the air service. Also, they should be supplied with tank-mounted heavy equipment. In winter, these CFCSEs would be able to earn additional income in logging enterprises where the equipment is in demand - on the building and clearing of roads and winter trails."