

But neither are we speaking in defence of Minlesprom. The Ministry's purification plants are classed with secondary installations. For example, at the "Kaliningradbumprom" Association, nature conservation structures which were built as long as 10 years ago are only 60 per cent phased in. But according to the plans, the installations should already have been operative there for five years. Facts of this kind are undermining the prestige of the forest products and paper industry.

"It might be possible to improve the environmental background of a Minlesprom mill by making more efficient use of the raw material," muses A. Globatskii, the head of the forest and woodworking industrial sector of the USSR Committee for Public Audit. "In the Irkutsk Oblast, where the largest pulp mills are concentrated, every year more than 3,000,000 tonnes of secondary wood products accumulate. Although these are well suited to the production of pulp, only 40 per cent are being used. The remainder is left to rot at dump sites or burnt in furnaces."

It would seem that given the extreme severity of the shortage, rigid State control will have to be imposed on the distribution and use of paper. But in place of the semblance of order which existed formerly we now have disorder. A large portion of the paper is going to the black market, where it is three to five times as expensive. It is on "illicit" paper that the newly emerged commercial merchants are doing business and the "informals" (neformaly) are being printed. I expressed interest in knowing where the editor of the newspaper with the fine sounding title but meagre content "The Alternative" (Alternativa), managed to obtain paper. "Where else but from the speculators - we all go to them", replied Emiliya Kharlanova, who runs off 50,000 copies at a time.