

which spews over 200,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide and 16,000 tonnes of nickel and copper into our atmosphere and water basins each year. Many years of this massive assault on the environment have denuded nearby hills and killed the forests.

"Severonikel's" destructive pollution is spreading farther and farther, and destroying the animal and plant world. The concentration of contaminants on the surface of the soil has reached such a level that it has become dangerous to eat berries and mushrooms picked over an area of approximately 1,500 square kilometres. Medical studies have revealed a high level of occupational diseases among workers within the plant itself, and an increase in diseases among children.

To be fair, it should be stated that a broad program aimed at restoring the environment in the region around the city of Monchegorsk was recently approved. Implementation of the program requires resources, however, and there is no where to get them.

These circumstances have prodded authorities into setting up a fund for the protection of the environment, money which should mostly be taken from "guilty enterprises." Fines paid for damaging the environment will serve a dual purpose. They will provide resources for environmental protection work, and serve as an economic incentive to enterprises to build cleaning facilities -- the less they pollute, the less they pay. The managers of the plant and other industrial enterprises in the city, however, have unanimously decided that although the idea, of course, is a good one, they will not pay for it. Let the fund be created through voluntary donations from citizens, they say. No producer has yet been found who is willing to do his legal bit for environmental protection -- too expensive, they have declared.