

The Chief of the Tracks Department of the Svobodnyi Division explains the situation as follows: "Altogether we need 40,000 ties for repairs to the tracks. But we have received only 2,600 new ties and about a quarter of the requisite number of old, discarded ones. A particularly alarming situation has developed on the Blagoveshchensk branch line, where 80,000 defective ties are lying on 108 kilometres of line.

The administration of the Transbaikal Railway has declared frankly that there is no point in expecting centralised deliveries of ties, as the forest-based industrial enterprises (lespromkhozy) are not fulfilling the terms of the contracts. For example, the Zeya enterprise in the Amur Oblast has delivered only 20,000 of the 85,000 ties specified in the contract. Other suppliers are in a similar situation and there is little time remaining before the end of the track repair season.

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Comment by our correspondent Anatolii Durov

It is being stated in some quarters that not only do we not have a market in the Soviet Union, but there won't be one in the near future. The distorted state of our economy is particularly noticeable in the price structure. Compare for yourselves: a cubic metre of first-grade, type one cross-ties costs 60 roubles, while a cubic metre of square sawn timber costs 200 roubles, even though it is twice as easy to saw. Given this situation, just try to get the lespromkhozy to fill the State production order for cross-ties, even under conditions of cost-accountability (khozraschet). The Transbaikal Railway has begun to pay for cross-ties at contracted prices that are three times higher but it turns out that even this is not enough.