

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES

Bureaucrats Fight Employee Participation

Arguing with the bosses only gets you into trouble. In Noyabr'sk as everywhere in the Tyumen' region of the Soviet North, this popular axiom from the Breznev era is particularly alive and well, for people come here only for a short time. If you know that you are only going to be in a place for a limited period, you can put up with discomfort in your everyday life and with petty tyranny from the boss. Why make your life more difficult?

But lately people have been less willing to keep quiet and to shut their eyes to abuses and bad management. Even nowadays it is not totally safe to stand out against such things. But those who do take a stand against official arbitrariness are aware that by losing management's goodwill, they stand a chance of acquiring something even more valuable: the feeling of spiritual freedom and of defending their human dignity.

The first person at Noyabr'skneftespetsstroi* to come to this realisation was probably a driver called Vladimir Nikolevich Slyusar'. He has been working here for seven years, ever since the enterprise first opened. He has never been afraid to argue with the administration. And it must be said that there are many things he does not agree with: he thinks that there are far too many managers, that State resources are being squandered, conditions at work are unsatisfactory, and he does not like the way in which decisions are taken about how the workers will live and what they will do, without so much as consulting them first.