

Since we have been talking about the cost of manufacturing the pulp, it follows that we should add on to the estimates the poisoning of the air at Archangel, Novodvinsk and Kotlas, which is well above the maximum permissible concentrations and catches one in the throat. Similarly, we have to add on the polluting of the Severnaya Dvina with phenols and other poisonous effluents, so much so that physicians are insistent in warning people not to bathe in that river. Is it only in these units that we measure this "cost"? For which foreign currency will substitute for the lost health of the northerners?

The decrepit combines have become the source of another very serious, death dealing hazard. Compare the following figures: in the West, enterprises of the pulp and paper industry use less than 20 cubic metres of water per ton of output. Enterprises in the Archangel Oblast, on the other hand, have a water-retention index of more than 100 cubic metres. But what is it that has brought them to an impasse? It must be the government's monopoly - I can find no other answer.

A good 80 percent of the production plant at the pulp and paper combines has been assembled from imported materials. Our industry has not produced and is not producing to this day machinery suitable for this sector. For renovation and repairs, of course, currency is needed, and in large amounts. But in the past year alone they have begun to release to the combines up to 25 percent of the revenue earned by them. But even this niggardly amount doesn't reach them in full. A quarter of it is withheld by the Ministry for its own centralised fund and a further 5 percent is the mandatory deduction for the Oblast Executive Committee.

For example, a sum of 1,500,000 roubles worth of freely convertible currency has been credited to the Solombala PPC in this way. The Combine has given half of it to a foreign trading enterprise for the purchase of spare parts from western firms. The remainder has been devoured by the domestic market, for there, if materials are in short supply it isn't roubles they want to hear about, but dollars.