

has been getting shallower every year. Specialists link this process with the long-standing and increasingly intensive timber fellings and the drying out of the marshes. The water balance of the North has been disturbed by enterprises of various departments, chief among which is the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry.

At an expanded session of the public association known as "Ecology of the North", which was carried on local television, there were calls such as "Wrench from the hands of the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry (Minlesprom SSSR) the whip which is driving on our timber enterprises (lespromkhozy)", and "Save the Northern Dvina for our children"! Many participants in the meeting, among them environmental conservationists, jurists, medical doctors and simple city dwellers, labelled the northern activities of our Ministry an ecological crime.

So let us try to understand this complicated situation. We will begin with logging. The areas currently involved in clear fellings are where the sources of many of the small rivers and streams emptying into the Northern Dvina are situated. The result is that the natural water balance is being disrupted to the fullest extent possible. And this is contrary to the will of the local administrators who are being pushed into doing this by the excessively large calculated coupe, as determined "from above". In the Oblast' today it is close to 29 million cubic metres, even though, according to scientists' calculations, it ought to be 22.4 million.

Certainly, in an approach such as this no thought is given to sparing the forests, or to