

The nature conservation decrees issued by government agencies have dealt a crippling blow to the pulp-and-paper industry. It would seem that Sharakhan is becoming a symptom of the times. Are our sector's mills a large proportion of which were built in the fifties, able to withstand the stringent requirements of the ecologists? At one stroke, without regard to the consequences, capacities for the production of 20,000 tonnes of paperboard, 40,000 tonnes of paper and 220,000 tonnes of pulp were crossed off.

But this is only the beginning. The sanitary and epidemiological stations are planning to bring to a halt the capacity for producing 5,000,000 tonnes of pulp (of the 11 million being produced), 1,000,000 tonnes of paperboard and almost 3,000,000 tonnes of paper!

"If this happens", says V. Malygin, Head of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) sub-section which is responsible for pulpwood and distribution plans for the forest products and paper industry, "we shall be without a domestic pulp-and-paper industry. The health protection agencies are imposing demands on the papermakers which even their colleagues from foreign countries are often not in a position to meet. For example, the experts who had arrived from Finland rated the Sloka pulp mill as one of the world's most ecologically clean enterprises, but the local authorities demanded its closure."

In Leningrad, the Ministry of the Timber Industry (Minlesprom) has got rid of the Priozersk pulp mill. But this led to a worsening of the ecological situation on Lake Ladoga, since the pulpmakers were not only treating their own effluents, but those from the city as well. At the time of writing, in order to build a mill equal in size to the Priozersk, the State will have to find 300,000,000 roubles.