

Judge for yourself. Our basic wage "ceiling" is 300 rubles. True, it still amounts to more than 600 rubles with all the territorial "entanglements." At one time, this seemed like "easy money," a complete fortune, On the mainland too it is now possible to earn no less than 600 rubles. But neither working conditions nor even our expenditures can be compared with those of the mainland - the market price of early vegetables reaches 10 rubles per kg; in those rate instances when fruit is available, the price is even steeper. And people take what they can get; no selection here.

Most important though is the fact that the wage "ceiling" restrains growth in output and labour productivity. People work "from here to there" in an effort to fit into the "even" 300 and are not interested in working for anything more. The State is forced to move in extra manpower, which in turn means more housing, hospitals, nursery schools, stores, products... In contrast to other parts of the country, 2.5 times more financial resources are needed in our region to organize cultural and communal facilities for northerners and to create more or less normal living and working conditions for them. And so is it not more sensible - from all standpoints - to give every person the chance to work more productively? This would make it possible to make do with less workers in the North.

I.K.: And this in fact is what is the aim of the current economic reforms and the introduction of cost accounting...

O.Z.: We attach high hopes to cost accounting. However, for the time being it is "spinning around," so to speak. For example, it is believed that the Udachnyi Combine, where I worked