

This in itself is sad to relate. But let us not forget that in the forests - including those that are diseased and dying - people are working. In the process, they are subjected to the effect of the substances that have harmed the forest.

For a long time it was thought (indeed, many people continue to think so) that the toilers of the forest have a beneficial industrial environment. In point of fact, there is not a mine or a dusty workshop where it is necessary to don a respirator. Today, closeness to nature is by no means always a synonym for cleanliness and well-being.

Of course, the lot of a forest toiler never was considered easy. Now, to such elements as cold, snow, rain and wind, as well as the unfavourable effects of noise, vibrations, biting flies, encephalitic ticks and unnatural posture, is added environmental pollution. Recently, there has been an increased incidence of diseases of the skin and respiratory system. Ladislav Barninets, who is the Chairman of the Forests Committee and also of the Central Committee of the Trade Union of Czechoslovakian foresters and woodworkers, stated that a medical survey of several hundred woodcutters in Czechoslovakia who had worked with gasoline driven power saws for more than five years resulted in such diseases being detected in more than 18 per cent of them. (The comparable figures for diseases of the spinal column and anchyloses of the upper extremities due to vibration are 54.5% and 39%).

Also, there are indications of increases in skin and kidney diseases among Soviet forestry and timber industry workers. This is traceable to the state of the environment, since in a number of the localities it is necessary to work in diseased and