

The main question is this: until when in our society, which has declared concern for people's welfare to come before anything else, are living conditions to be dictated by production rather than the consumer? The question is by no means rhetorical. Hasn't it already proved impossible to predict the escalating boom in furniture sales and somehow moderate it?

The capacities of the existing furniture enterprises in the country are sufficient to permit an overall increase of almost thirty per cent in the output of merchandise. Currently, annual production is valued at about seven billion roubles, added to which is whatever amount has remained unclaimed.

It is true that for these, so to speak, free furniture capacities, there is not enough wood particle board and wood fibreboard and that veneer is also scarce. The disease is chronic and it has been known for quite some time that the resource base is in a lamentable state. This newspaper has long been sounding the alarm on this subject ("An Ineradicable Shortage - Or What Chance Will a New Settler Have of Buying Furniture in the Year 2000?" - March 29, '88; "Word Soon Gets Out" - April 9; "Queuing up for -- a Disappointment" - April 30, and others). Judging from the official replies received by the editors, remedial steps are being taken. In the main, they are predicting the start up of additional lines and the acquisition of new plant. References to this will be found in today's reports from our correspondents. But they are mostly speaking of tomorrow's reserves. What is to be done about the present?

As a very rough approximation, it is estimated that almost 20 per cent of the board