

A. "Agreed. To put it bluntly, the continued existence of the Ministry is on account of the highly profitable furniture, paper and match producing industries. The remaining sub-sectors - logging, wood processing, wood chemistry and the rest - are as depressed as ever. Manual labour is everywhere predominant.

"For a long time now the skidding tractors have been virtually obsolete. They have already been in production for more than 15 years without any special design modifications introduced. The USSR Ministry for the Manufacture of Construction and Road Machinery (Minstroydormash) is supplying us with machinery which is two to three times inferior to world prototypes on every count. And to be honest, we have only half as much as we need of it. The incoming machines are being used mainly as replacements for those being discarded. The level of mechanization at the logging sites is about 45 per cent, with some 200,000 workers in the sub-sector engaged in manual labour."

Q. "How has the sector managed to survive in this way?"

A. "It's necessary to look back at the past. Immediately after the war, steps were taken to organize a machine-building base for the sector. In the fifties it had already furnished us with skidding tractors, winches, mobile electric power plants, motorized pole-trailers, chain conveyors, ships for timber floating and much else. This was before the advent of the Sovnarkhozy (Regional Economic Councils).

"Later, after a number of reorganizations, the sector's machine-building plants were transferred