

The Art of Survival At Dikson

Anyone who has visited the small arctic village of Dikson on the shore of the Kara Sea has certainly been struck by how dirty its streets are, by the refuse scattered about. For a long time this was not considered anything out of the ordinary. What could you expect of people who considered themselves to be here temporarily? What sort of claims could you submit to expeditions if, in the national interest, they dumped tons of iron into the sea and on its shores, ploughed up the tundra with the tracks of their all-terrain vehicles and spilled fuel on the ground. In a word, "conquered" the North.

Today the "greens" are making ever firmer demands to halt destruction of the vulnerable arctic environment. But the ministries and government agencies are not paying much attention to them.

"I am amazed," says V. Galkin, Chief Physician of the Dikson Line Public Health and Epidemiological Station for Water Transport, "that we haven't had some sort of epidemic break out before now. Believe me, the conditions for this exist in Dikson. Apparently, it is only the cold weather that slows down development of infections."

Specialists feel that the ecological situation in the coastal region of the Soviet Arctic is growing worse every year, although this is not happening as fast as in the large industrial cities. And still, the consequences of man's economic activity here are fairly tangible. Fishermen claim that the number of fish in the Gulf of Enisei and the Kara Sea has declined in recent years. Stocks of the Enisei whitefish are threatened.

It appears that an indifferent attitude toward the environment of the North has become the norm. In 1986 a fish plant in Dikson acquired the large refrigerated fishing trawler "Mongoliya". This ship, which has operated