

We have to remember that the winner of the competition is awarded the Red Challenge Banner from the editorial board of Pravda, a newspaper which is printed on paper supplied by all three combines. This newspaper, which is an end-user of the product, could easily serve as an objective quality arbiter for the combines' paper.

A. Stepanov, the Deputy Director for Economics of the Balakhna Combine, told me that this system has been in place previously:  
"Representatives from Pravda used to come to work in the commission that drew up the results of the competition."

"Do you mean the representatives from the editorial board or workers from the publishers and type-setting shops, ie. the actual end-users?" I asked in clarification.

"Do you think that the printers would be interested in our inflating the quality results? You know the better the paper the higher its price and they are more interested in price than quality.... This is why you can't expect the printers to give an objective evaluation and, furthermore, their presses are still far from perfect."

This is an unexpected twist, don't you think? If the actual consumers aren't interested in the quality of the paper then what can you expect of the papermakers themselves?

But let's return to the actual competition. The Kondopoga Pulp and Paper Combine was finally awarded the Red Banner at the final meeting. The award was not presented by a representative from Pravda, as one would have expected, but by someone