

In an attempt to quell the sudden fears that have arisen among the population, remove the poison from sight and create a semblance of wellbeing, the paper mill and the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry decided to install a deep-seated outlet for industrial effluents in the Nizhnii Vyg River. However, the residents of surrounding villages and the town of Belomorsk quickly recognised this cunning manoeuvre and demanded that the republican authorities immediately prohibit the building of it. Otherwise, not only would the river be ruined but also Sorokskaya Bay on the White Sea - the habitat of salmon and White Sea herring.

The emergency that has arisen at Segezha is the fruit of a long-standing skepticism about environmental conservation. Taking advantage of the absence of control and lack of openness, at the enterprises there has been repeated postponement of the installation of nature conservation facilities, slow progress in building those already planned, with the existing ones allowed to break down. At the paper mill, for example, only 18 of the 205 sources of atmospheric pollution have been supplied with gas scrubber units.

Unfortunately, neither the municipal authorities nor the sanitary services of the town and the autonomous republic have taken a stand in this matter. Despite the people's complaints, they have not closed so much as a single workshop or a single noxious factory. This despite all the heart to heart talks on moral themes.

Is there a way out of the situation? Can the shutting down of an enterprise be avoided? Certainly. In the first place it is high time to abandon sulphate cooking of the pulp and convert to the ecologically clean production technology, namely, oxygen cooking. Its introduction has already been delayed by USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry for more than ten years.

Secondly, gas scrubber units need to be purchased and installed at Segezha right away. Given the 80 millions in profits earned by the papermakers, the expenditure of two to four millions on their installation is