

In my view, all of this is occurring because, at the time of distributing the State production order, which is drawn up by the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), there is no elementary procedure whereby whatever the Ministry of the Timber Industry is currently in a position to produce can be utilised thriftily. Consumption of wooden cross-ties could be substantially reduced if a larger proportion of the spur lines, sidings and lightly used sections of a main line were to be laid on reinforced concrete and a serious effort made to use old cross-ties that have been discarded, for many of them could serve a second time around.

It is necessary for the entire volume of cross-ties being manufactured today to be in the same hands: they should be placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Railways. Even though this may conflict with the already rapid growth in market relations, for the time being there seems to be no other way out. A controlled monopoly for cross-ties, on the one hand, will make it possible to substantially improve track maintenance arrangements on the railway network. On the other - it will arouse the interest and compel the railway workers and all the other consumers to make more efficient use of old, discarded materials.

We need to introduce order in the planning of new tracks. Not infrequently the planners, for no good reason whatsoever, make a point of stockpiling specifically wooden cross-ties for the building of new spur lines, even though in a number of instances it would be fully possible to use concrete ties or discarded wooden ones. For example, on our 25-kilometre sector Zharyk - Kairakty which is currently under construction, wooden ties have been installed in accordance with the plan. But traffic on this segment amounts to one train every 24 hours. The picture is the same on the Kzyl-Kzhar-Shubarkul' sector. This is happening because the plans, as a rule, are not subjected to expert examination by the railway workers. The end result is that new wooden ties, which are worth their weight in gold today, are being laid in places where it would have been possible to manage without them.