

The enterprise has been denied the opportunity of benefitting from the present strong demand created by glasnost for its products. Today, instead of the 30 million roubles in profits which could be earned by the installed plant, it is earning only about 6 million. Reconstruction of the industrial plant has dragged on for a decade, the wages of the papermakers are the lowest in the city, and the line-up for housing extends literally over the horizon.

But the most pressing problem of all is the extreme shortage of unprocessed wood.

Recently, at the behest of USSR Gosstab (State Committee for Material and Technical Supply) which has fiscal interests in the region, a film crew arrived in Perm to produce a news item about allegedly "remiss" managers who had been dispatching valuable sawtimber instead of cheap pulpwood for use in papermaking. In actual fact, the problem turned out to be quite different. Rather than indicating the presence of "remiss" managers the evidence that sawtimber was being used for a purpose other than what was intended, pointed to the fact that the wood-pulp conversion capacities which had been developed in the Western Urals were caught in a dangerous situation with respect to supplies of raw material. What was needed was an immediate review of the timber supply policy in the region, while there was still time to do this. The subsequent course of events was wholly unexpected.

The then head of the Perm Timber Industry Association ("Permlesprom") was E.A. Kurbash and the filming crew hunted him down. The shortage of pulpwood had placed Kurbash in a desperate position. To supply sawtimber instead of pulpwood to the paper combines was out of the question: It is categorically forbidden and punishable. But not to do so would stop the papermaking machines, which is also categorically forbidden and punishable.