

And what is 12 tonnes? A drop in the bucket! Human life in the Arctic is literally maintained by petroleum products. They provide heat and electricity and freedom of movement. At a high cost, as we shall see. In order to transport one tonne of fuel over an average distance, one and half tonnes must be consumed.

Where is the bureaucratism here, you ask? Well, the bulk of all air freight shipments at high latitudes could be curtailed if the fuel was brought in by steamship. But...A simple example. Next year the geodesists are planning to set up a base on Graham Bell I. There is a convenient wharf there and reservoirs. They would like to transfer the fuel this summer... Nothing will come of it. It would have been necessary to apply a whole year ago for steamship transport. But a year ago nobody had asked the geodesists to work in that region.

Old polar hands remember that it didn't used to be this way. The Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route, which was eliminated a few years ago, used to solve such problems straight away.

"All the pilots used to be under the same polar aviation authority", relates the Commander of the Khatanga airline, A. Kalhmet'ev. "Many of today's problems just didn't exist. But now - if I land my airplane in Yakutia, no one will allow me, a stranger, to refuel. Unless the local commander happens to be a good friend..."

Well, commanders, even if they don't know one another, can talk to each other. But what about customers? The chief of a group of the Magadan aerogeodesic enterprise, E. Galeev, for example, was simply stumped. He needed "MI-6" helicopters for regular trips between Cherskii Settlement and Chetyrekhstolbovoi I. There were none in Cherskii. But if you use your