

PANEL
HOW TO GET GOOD LABOR PERFORMANCE

By: Robert Millard 1/

In Ontario, the labor types and sources differ greatly with those of Michigan and Ohio. Most of our labor originally came from Europe; the predominate nationalities being Belgian, France, Hungarian, Italian and Portugese. Most of the workers live in the sugar beet growing area, but a few transient workers still move in from the flue-cured tobacco districts around Simcoe and Delhi.

The following points are considered important if a grower is to receive a good labor performance.

1. SELECT LABOR IN ADVANCE:

Selection may be made the previous year if the labor has done a satisfactory job of thinning the beets. If this is the case, mention the fact that a good job was done and that you would like them to return the following year.

2. CONTACT LABOR EARLY:

Contact labor in advance of the thinning season and advise them of acreage and when work will commence. If living accommodations and transportation will be available, it should also be mentioned at this time.

3. SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF FIELD:

Good drainage is important, especially in clay type soils where after spring rains the tendency is for a crust to form, thereby increasing the difficulty of the thinning operation.

Correct land preparation is also important. The field should be properly plowed the previous fall so that any crop refuse will be turned under where it will do the most good, and where it will not interfere with cultivating and hoeing.

A grower should try to choose a field that is as "Weed Free" as possible. Weeds can be more easily controlled by using chemical sprays on the previous crops, such as cereal grains and corn.

4. SEED:

The proper use of seed can make a great difference in the performance of labor. At the present time in Ontario, only

1/ Fieldman - Canada & Dominion Sugar Co. Ltd.

two sizes of seed are distributed. Monogerm seed, that is $6\frac{1}{2} - 8$ with a seeding recommendation of $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per acre, and $8 - 9\frac{1}{2}$ with a seeding recommendation of $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per acre. In 1964, three pounds of seed was the average amount used per acre, which would indicate that growers are closely following the recommendations.

5. PRECISION PLANTING:

Precision planting is the next step towards helping the labor to do a good job. In Ontario, the recommendation is for a 2-inch spacing in the row. This spacing has been found to be the best when emergence, ease of thinning and final stand are considered.

6. CHEMICAL WEED CONTROL:

Extensive experiments with a number of sprays have shown that the present recommendations should be - PCA (4 lbs. Active per acre) for broadleaf weeds and TCA (4 lbs. Active per acre) for grasses. At the present time the cost per acre for an overall treatment is not economical, so most growers have adopted the use of a 6 to 8 inch band application.

The use of these chemicals will substantially reduce the weed population in the row and thereby ease and accelerate the thinning operation.

7. CULTIVATION:

Correct cultivation is perhaps the most important thing the grower can do to assist the labor in doing a satisfactory job of thinning. The cultivator should be properly adjusted during first cultivation to a 2-inch band so that it will perform efficiently and remove the weeds and, also, greatly reduce the amount of soil that has to be moved from the row. In this way the man-hours and cost per acre will be reduced and a more satisfactory job will be accomplished by the labor.

8. LABOR MANAGEMENT:

To get good labor performance a grower should strive to create a good labor-grower relationship. In most cases, this relationship can be established by the grower if he shows consideration and cooperation with the labor whenever possible.

When the thinning season arrives and the labor enters the field, make sure they understand clearly what is expected of them and what they can expect from you as a sugar beet grower.

The price per acre or hour should always be established before the work begins, not after it is finished. This practice usually saves both parties the embarrassment of a disagreement.

In conclusion, I feel that to obtain good labor performance, a grower should consider all eight points:

1. Select labor in advance.
2. Contact labor early.
3. Select and properly prepare the field.
4. Proper use of seed.
5. Early precision planting.
6. Chemical weed control.
7. Correct cultivation.
8. The use of good labor management practices.

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By: Walter Drexler 1/

The best labor performance in the factory district, as well as from the Fieldman's area, seems to come from the old labor. That is, labor that comes back year after year so a fieldman must try to keep the families that work for him satisfied.

I start preparing for the coming season by sending my labor a card at Christmas time, then usually write or call them two weeks before we want them to come. The electricity is turned on and houses checked and unlocked a day or two before we expect them so that the families that have their houses from year to year can go to them if they come in during the night. We call the office several times a day when we are expecting new families so they do not have a long wait at the office. At the time the families are taken to the house I give them a paper with my name and telephone number and the labor house address. Their grocery checks are made up when their work sheets come through. They get their check when they are taken to the house. They are shown where the nearest store is and I check with them each day for several days, as they usually have questions, -- such as insurance, what doctor to go to if there is illness and the location of their friends who are in the area. The location of the various churches in the area are shown to the families, and where I have a group of them living in one colony, our church group goes to their camp twice each week giving them clothing for the children, and instruct them in their religion. Also, see that they are transported to church on Sunday, if it is necessary. A doctor from our group also goes out each week and checks the children, and gives them shots or medicine when it is necessary without charge to the labor.

Of the 101 workers, which consisted of 21 family groups that worked in my area last year, there were only two new families. These 101 workers averaged $17\frac{1}{4}$ acres per worker, so were well satisfied with the amount of money they made.

In order for them to work that amount of acres the growers had to cooperate by very close and early cultivation, using mechanical thinning where possible. Four hundred forty-eight acres were mechanically thinned and some spraying was done. All but two fields were paid at the regular thinning rate, even if they were sprayed or mechanically thinned. As most growers can see, there is an advantage in getting good reliable labor each year, in preference to saving a dollar or two an acre and having dissatisfied labor. These are good aids for labor production, but the main one in my opinion is the fieldman having the labor and putting them in the field at the proper time, and then checking on them each day. When checking fields that have more than one group, it is very important to visit each one,

as their feelings are easily hurt if they think you favor one family over another. By checking them daily a fieldman knows how long each field will take to complete so that there is no loss of time between fields. In checking the quality of work it is always important to go to the head of the family or group and explain to them that the grower is the one that pays them, and that they must do the kind of job he insists on. In handling complaints about the work being done, a fieldman should handle them in a calm manner and not get excited. Most workers can be shown what is expected of them and how to do the job properly. It is also very important to let them know when they are doing good work, and that you are happy to have them work for you. Of course, keeping their records up to date so they can be paid as soon as the job is complete is very important. Good labor performance seems to tie in with the ability of the fieldman to gain the trust of the laborer. This is done by being honest and fair with them and letting them know that you respect and like them and are interested in their welfare, as well as their ability to do the job they were hired to do.

Probably the most important thing in handling labor is personal contact with them by seeing them often, and being available for them to call or see you when problems come up.

In summing up the various ways to get good labor performance, I would list them in this manner:

1. The ability of the grower to have fields as free from weeds as possible through minimum tillage, spraying, mechanical thinning and especially early and close cultivation. Of course, space planting helps a great deal, also.
2. Getting experienced families on time and keeping them year after year, through the methods I have already mentioned. This will assure the grower a good labor supply and the laborers will be satisfied because they will earn a good wage for the amount of time they work in the beet fields.

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By: Alfred Hasso 1/

To get good labor performance from our workers we must first of all gain the confidence and respect of our workers.

To do this we must prove to them that we are sincerely interested in their welfare.

The great majority of the people who do the work for the Monitor Sugar Division come from the State of Texas. They spend many long hours on the road before they reach their destination. Therefore, we should see that they are promptly and properly housed as soon as they arrive in our area. I say, promptly, because the people are usually very tired when they arrive and their only concern is to get a good warm meal and to find a place to rest.

We should make sure that their house is in complete readiness when they arrive; that they have enough bedding; that they have fuel to cook with, and that a good water supply is available to them.

The workers are usually short of funds when they arrive, so we must see to it that they have the means for obtaining groceries. We do this by taking them to the grocery store and authorizing credit for them until they get their weekly grocery allowance.

If any of the workers or their children are sick when they arrive, we should see that they get immediate medical attention. Before we leave them, we should let them know how they can contact us in case of an emergency.

I like to visit the workers as soon as they have become settled and explain our work program to them. They like to know how the crop is progressing and when they will start working. If blocking and thinning hasn't started yet, we sometimes can find other jobs for them to do to keep them from having idle time.

In recent years our company has secured hospitalization insurance for our workers. This is a good time to explain to them the benefits they have in this program. Otherwise, they might not take advantage of these benefits. We should also assure them that we will authorize necessary medical attention for them whenever they need it.

It is also necessary to promote a good relationship between the worker and the grower. One that will be a benefit to both parties.

1/ Fieldman, Monitor Sugar Division

To make sure that there are no misunderstandings, the worker and the grower should get together with the fieldman to determine a fair rate for the job to be done. The grower should explain and show the worker how he wants his crop handled. He should follow this up by inspecting the work from time to time. If he fails to do this, he will very often be disappointed. The grower that doesn't show an interest in his crop will find out that the worker doesn't either.

By the same token the worker must be made to realize that he has an obligation to fulfill. If he expects to get paid well, he must do the job well. The head of the family should be responsible for the work that is being done. If any disagreement arises about the way the work is being done, it should be discussed with the workers. Usually a grower is more satisfied with a small group of workers, one that he can check over a longer period of time.

Workers normally earn more money working in clean fields even though they get a higher rate for weedy fields. Our aim then should be to have clean fields for them to do.

We should show the grower that spraying for weeds can be a big benefit to both him and the worker. We have herbicides now that do a very effective job of controlling weeds. On one experimental plot in my area where pyramin was used, the workers told me it took them as long to do the check plot of one acre as it did to do the three acres that were sprayed.

Proper seed spacing is equally important. A seed spacing of two to three inches is sufficient to insure the grower of a good stand and still allow the worker to make good progress in the field.

We should also insist that the grower does a good job of cultivating before we put labor in the fields. By good cultivating we mean that the cultivator should get close to the row and still leave the field level and without ridges near the beets, so the worker can do a good job without too much difficulty.

One of the areas of major concern to us now is the amount of time it takes to do the hoeing. We find that in some cases it takes almost as much time to do the hoeing as it did to do the blocking and thinning.

The worker can help himself here by getting all the weeds when he is thinning the beets. However, we all know the most important thing is for the grower to get back in and cultivate the beets as soon as possible after they have thinned. He should take enough time to adjust the cultivator so that he will cover the small weeds. If he delays in cultivating, the weeds will grow too big to be covered and consequently will create a problem for the worker and the grower.

Finally, we should see that the worker gets a just settlement for the work he has completed. He should be provided with a statement of his account with the company. On his settlement sheet we list the names of the growers he worked for, the number of acres he completed for each grower, the rate for each field and, also, the amount of his earnings. We should take time to explain the settlement to the worker so that he fully understands it.