

AFL-CIO Chief Convinced Migrant Farm Workers Can Be Organized

Union Invests Over \$300,000 In Experiment

By A. ROBERT SMITH
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Washington — After nearly two years of efforts to organize migrant farm workers on the Pacific Coast, the AFL-CIO is convinced that it can be done — and that in future years workers migrating to Oregon will be members of that large union.

This, at least, is the estimate of a chief union organizer, Franz Daniel, who has spent a good deal of time in California supervising the campaign to make dues-paying union members out of American—not Mexican—farm workers.



By Lynn M. Watkins

All Lower Animals Are Chained to Identical Behavior

Step by planned step she followed the prescribed behavior pattern of her kind. Each instinctive action triggered the next in ordered sequence. She couldn't help herself.

It was ordained that she should gather a drop of water at the tiny roadside puddle, that she should chew the bark from the dead tree limb, that she should mix it with saliva from her mouth, and plaster the plastic material on the rafters of the old barn.

She didn't even know at the time, that as soon as the mud-crypt was made, another instinct would compel her to deposit an egg and seal up the capsule. She didn't know why she left an opening in one end, or that she would have to seal it over later.

Compelling Compulsion
Like all her countless wasp ancestors she, too, was chained to their identical behavior pattern. Each and every creature, wasp, worm, bird, reptile, mammal, or fish, all chained by this same compelling compulsion; the absolute necessity of doing only what their ancestors did, all following an inborn pattern of activity.

Man remembers things by an association of ideas. Lower animals accomplish acts and performances by an association of instincts. One action follows another in regular sequence. Interrupt the chain anywhere and the poor dope will have to begin all over again, right from the beginning.

Once the "thread" is broken there can be no continuation; a new start must be made. This has prevented the creature from rising above its environment.

It seems that it is not even necessary for an animal even to have a brain, but still they have inborn in them all the instinctive behavior patterns typical to their kind. There is plenty of "room" in the brain of an elephant or a horse to store a fund of information, but these animals know no more than a mouse or a shrew, whose brains are smaller than an aspirin tablet.

Golf Ball Size Brain
A crocodile which can weigh a thousand pounds has a brain no larger than a golf ball, and of course the actions of the big jerk show it. He could hardly be credited with possessing instincts, yet he has them.

The brain of an ant is so tiny it cannot be seen without a microscope, yet retained in it somehow are all the instincts of all its countless generations of ancestors. It would seem that instincts or emotions do not occupy any room at all.

Possibly, one single nerve, smaller than a human hair and of no length whatever, can contain a wide assortment of necessary impulses. Instinct, intelligence, intuition; these are a trio of things that complicate the actions of both man and beast, bug and fish. The trouble is, if we would but admit it, we do not know where one leaves off and another begins.

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"This has been pretty much an experiment, and the problems are huge," said Daniel. "But we have demonstrated that it can be done."

Reportedly the AFL-CIO has thus far invested over \$300,000 in this experiment. The growth of the membership in the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, as the farm union is called, has been slow. Daniel won't reveal the number of union members, but reportedly it is less than 4,000.

The whole program comes up for review by top union officials early in January, but Daniel is convinced it will be continued. Originally it was started as a two-year experiment, he said.

The union has no plans for sending organizers into Oregon, he said. They will continue to restrict their campaign to California.

"California is the giant," said Daniel. "If we can do it in California, we can do it anywhere else. California is their base. From there they

move out into Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah and other states."

Daniel said the fundamental problem has yet to be solved—how to run a union composed of agricultural workers who are transient. This is where the experimentation takes place. Each worker has his dues book, and a shop steward moves with them as they migrate to different areas.

Major Struggle
In California there has been a major struggle be-

tween the large growers who rely heavily upon migratory labor and the union, but little violence. Daniel says one mark of preliminary success is that farm wages in the nine agricultural counties of California in which they are organizing increased \$12 million this past year. These wage rates are set by the California Department of Labor.

As an example, he said the rate for tomatoes went up from 12c to 17c per box. Living conditions have not improved generally, he said, which is one of the union's chief complaints. Legislation is needed in this area, he said.

The union is opposed to the continued use of Mexicans, as is allowed under public law 78, as supervised by the Labor Department. That law expires next June, but the

union does not intend to urge its immediate repeal, said the union official.

"We think a five-year phasing-out period would be reasonable," Daniel observed. He claimed the large farm operators use Mexicans to keep the wage rates low. When asked if there would be sufficient domestic migrant workers if the Mexicans were excluded, Daniel said where would be if wages were raised.

The union's long term aim, then, is to stop the Mexican labor program, organize most of the American migrant workers and get their wages raised so that more persons will go into the harvest fields, then get their living conditions improved, from housing to education for their children.

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