

Hope Dims For The Return Of A Good Five-Cent Cigar

By HAL BOYLE

TAMPA, Fla., (P)—A vice president of the United States once said:

"What the country needs is a good five-cent cigar."

Well, there isn't much hope of getting it.

"You'll never see a good five-cent cigar again," said a spokesman for the clear Havana cigar industry which centers here.

"Not with wages and the cost of materials what they are today."

The war brought a 30 per cent increase in the output of cigars, but there is a current slump in the market for hand-made, high-priced cheroots.

Last October tobacco manufacturers throughout America turned out 594,000,000 cigars, expecting a Christmas boom. Grades retailing up to two-for-a-quarter did well. A lot of the

three-for-a-dollar brands are still unbought, drying out on the shelves. That means unemployment and less chicken and rice for the hand-cigar rollers in Ybor City, a bit of old Spain set down in Tampa.

But veterans who learned to like cigars when they could buy them at cost at army exchanges around the world aren't going back to cigarettes.

Constant Smokers
"A cigar smoker never goes back to cigarettes or pipes," said the spokesman. "If times get tough, he just smokes a cheaper cigar."

Cuban and Spanish workers who for generations have made a living rolling cigars by hand are losing out to the machine. Already more machine-made cigars are turned out here than are rolled by hand.

"There will always be a mar-

ket for quality hand-rolled cigars," said the spokesman, "but it is a dying craft."

Hand cigar makers earn from \$40 to \$80 a week, depending on their output which varies anywhere from 250 to 1000 cigars a day. But a machine manned by two women can turn out between 5000 and 6000 in eight hours. And the women, brought in during wartime, are staying on. Many are middle-aged and of Anglo-Saxon descent.

An executive who showed me through the largest factory here said it was all bosh that workers ever sealed cigars with a tongue flick.

"That's nonsense," he said. "We've always used gum tragacanth, brought from Arabia. We tried all sorts of substances during the war, but nothing worked as well."

Price of the gum rose from \$4 a pound to \$18, but the supply is better again.

One thing you don't see in a cigar factory—a sign saying "No smoking."

Only a three-handed worker could smoke anyway. He needs two hands to roll the cigars.

Flu Closes

Modoc High School

ALTURAS, March 31 — The Modoc Union high school and the elementary school have been closed most of the past week owing to an epidemic of flu.

Four teachers and 88 students were absent Tuesday from the high school and 75 children from the elementary school.

The board of trustees decided to close the schools telling the students to report Monday morning.

If the epidemic has subsided then, the schools will open.

A large number of cases of flu is reported among the adult population in the city.

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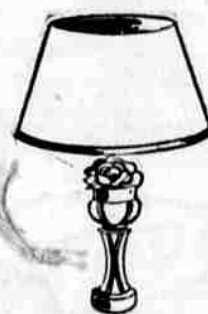
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