

FOLLOWING is Part 2 of a four-part series on the steelband by **Nestor Sullivan** and **Ian "Teddy" Belgrave**. The series laments the lack of enterprise which has plagued the movement and suggests a way forward.

It's a shame no pan in school

6. Pan In The Education System

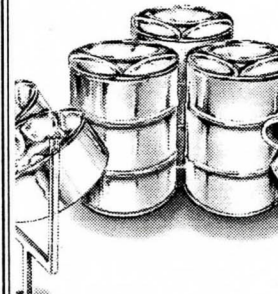
It is a national shame, the total absence of the steelband from the

curricula of our schools! One could hardly get a better example of our extremely poor sense of self-worth

as a people or of our myopic interpretation of the true meaning of our independence as a nation, than our

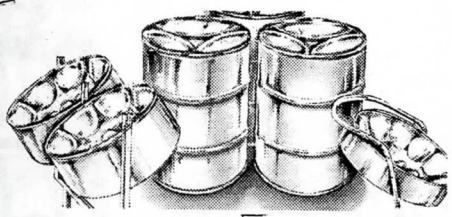
failure to systematically promote among our youth the steelband, our finest creation.

No praise is too much for the commendable pioneering work of Dr Ann Marie Osbourne and Messrs Harold Headley and Sat Sharma at the Creative Arts Centre of the UW1 St Augustine, in establishing certificate and diploma programmes in music, using the steelpan instrument. But this is clearly insufficient, 50 years after the birth of the steelband, 30 years after its formal introduction in the



school system in London and some two decades after the introduction of full degree programmes in the university system in the USA. Our finest young pannists, 34 years after our independence, still have to journey abroad, at very great cost, to achieve a degree in music using our national instrument!

At the level of our secondary and primary schools, the situation is even worse. There have been a few window-dressing programmes



No pride in our national instrument

initiated over the years, but these are a joke compared to what is possible and what is required. Our educators, unlike the Barbara Porters (referred to in Section A) of the world, still do not believe that our national instrument could or should find pride of place, next to the recorder, piano or guitar.

Those schools which have developed significant steel orchestras (and they comprise less than three per cent of the schools in Trinidad and Tobago) have done so only because of some committed and dedicated "steelband" teacher at the school, who carries out his/her work against unbelievable odds, without any support from the education authorities.

We also have to recognise the yeoman service of the steelband tutors outside the formal school system. That work which was pioneered by people like Nervin "Teach" Saunders, Sherman Fyfe and Mrs Louise McIntosh's famous Pan Pipers School, has now developed into full-fledged steelband institutions like Gary Straker's and Parry's Pan Schools. These efforts, like those of the Police Youth Clubs, cry out for recognition and financial support from the State and corporate sectors.

7. Absence of Intellectual Work

The non-performance of the University of the West Indies in terms of scientific research on the steelband is matched by its non-performance in research/analysis of a historical/ sociological nature. Apart from the occasional undergraduate thesis that finds itself on the shelves of the library at St Augustine, there has not been a single major work of this kind emanating from the hallowed halls of this institution since it came into existence!

All major publications on the steelband produced locally have been found to be wanting in fundamental ways. The last such effort, by Dr Blake, was scandalously deficient in scholarship and content. Pan Trinbago commissioned Ian Belgrave to do a comprehensive study of the steelband since 1994. Although the funding for his project has long ago become available, for reasons best left unsaid, that project has not yet started!