

Pat Bishop wows pan management workshop

ML100

By TERRY JOSEPH

OF THE seven presenters at last Saturday's Pan Management Workshop, Pat Bishop emerged as the most memorable, after speaking on a topic about which she admitted little knowledge.

Mounted by the Laventille Steelband Festival committee as part of its three-tier Emancipation celebration, the workshop, which was held at Angostura's Glass Room in Success Village, was opened by Culture Minister Ganga Singh.

Dr Lloyd Best and Dr Keith Nurse comprised the panel of the workshop's opening module.

Best exercised his School in Pan concept, which puts the panyard at the centre of economic activity in communities. He earned a tremendous ovation from some 80 participants drawn from steel orchestra management, schools and other relevant interests.

Nurse fleshed out his belief that an Export Processing Zone for pan was one possible relief available to the economic woes of steel orchestras and current dilemma of the national musical instrument.

Accountant Brian Awang discussed Financial Management in module three and, in the post-lunch period, artiste/producer Errol Fabien spoke on Performance & Presentation. Witco's Keith Carter and this reporter addressed Marketing and Public Relations before the final module, which allowed for open discussion on The Way Forward.

Module two—Organisational

Structure and Human Resources—was left exclusively to Bishop who, at the onset, admitted she knew little about the topic, but had consulted relevant literature and spoken with practitioners.

Known as "The First Lady of Pan" for her work in bringing several steel orchestras into winners' row, Bishop said: "A steelband isn't a democratic organisation."

"It is very hierarchical and depends for its effectiveness upon strong, top-down leadership. The arranger is the only musician, in the absolute meaning of the word, which a steelband has. It is a remarkable circumstance, a band of 100-plus people performing music that begins and ends for them in mystery.

"The astonishing and terrifying circumstance in a steelband is the fact that only one person in the organisation has any musical independence. Like the tuner, the arranger is paid, but need not be a member of the band, yet they are in control of the two ingredients that constitute the core of a band's product—the music and the instruments," she said.

She then turned to the cost of the product delivered annually by steel orchestras. "Allow \$40,000 in arranger's fees, set aside \$15,000 for new instruments and another \$20,000 for blending pans, \$12,000 for maintenance, \$10,000 for stands and cases and before the band leaves its panyard, it has spent \$97,000—all for a maximum of 72 minutes of music.

"When you add enormous transport costs, Carnival T-shirts, catering, incidentals and uniforms—in a year that in addition to Carnival hosts a music festival—a band's expenses can run to \$260,000.

"Bear in mind that the human resource base for this expenditure numbers about 140 at Carnival and an average of 30 to 40 for the rest of the year," she said. "Also bear in mind that the average band's earnings are unlikely to ever rise above \$50,000, all for 72 minutes of music of which no more than 20 to 30 minutes have been developed into music worth listening to. Quite plainly, all aspects of steelband practice need a reality check.

"The musically illiterate pan-nist spends about 384 hours learning to recall 72 minutes of music which costs the band \$3,500 per minute at first performance. But in the human resource management context, the most worrying of all the numbers is not, to me, the money. The best orchestras abroad are extremely expensive and do not support themselves, but have enormous repertoires and can play, at sight, anything that has been written for their instruments.

"Quite clearly, the floor member does not bring enough to the exercise. He takes too long to learn too little. He needs to learn to read music and to write it down. He needs to own his instrument. He needs to be transformed from being a dependent panman into an independent musician.

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