

14.7.89 Desperate remedies for Despers tour

SELWYN TARRADATH continues 'On Tour With Despers.' Tarradath is the Education Officer with Pantrinbago, and recently returned from touring with Desperadoes.

JOHN CAMPI finalised negotiations in November with Pantrinbago for Desperadoes to appear at Carnegie Hall for the annual New York Pops benefit concert in May of 1989. The Ministry of Tourism undertook responsibility for the venture and operations were put in place.

Free Tour

Pantrinbago has always insisted that both the steelbands and players going abroad on a tour should be given the opportunity to make some money. It doesn't make sense to go through all that trouble and expense just to go out for a few days and come back more broken than before.

There are always prob-

lems with visas, work permits and musicians unions, so it is usually easier for the authorities to go under the label of cultural exchange.

A cultural tour means that the band is not paid and the players receive only a meal allowance and subsistence. Many members are forced to take no pay leave in order to make the trip.

The specialists like the tuners and arrangers are most often reluctant to go as it would mean giving up lucrative employment to go on a free tour.

We brought out this point strongly to Campi and our government representatives. Campi agreed to seek sponsorship for some extra gigs, whereby the band could make some money. He informed the band's representatives, and the Tourism officials that he had succeeded in arranging a three week tour for the band with some lucrative profit-making opportunities.

Pantrinbago had meetings with the Ministry of Tourism where the Desperadoes prize trip was

often on the agenda. One meeting called specifically to deal with the tour had to be aborted because the Chairman, Borel, stated that there was a void in communication between his Ministry and the Ministry of Sport, Youth Affairs, Culture and the Creative Arts which had an important role to play in the organisation of the trip.

About three weeks before the band was due to leave we were informed by officials of Desperadoes that the tour was in jeopardy.

Campi informed them

that he had not received in writing, official confirmation that the tour was on, and as such he had to cancel the other engagements where he was not directly involved, leaving only four days of engagements.

Brief Meeting

The truth is up to that point in time, Cabinet had not approved the tour.

The band decided, rather reluctantly, to go ahead. The next problem was flight arrangements since BWLA was fully booked for that period.

The contingent, which included myself as the Pantrinbago representative and Farida Kerry of the Ministry of Sport, Youth Affairs, Culture and the Creative Arts, was scheduled to leave on May 19, but this was brought forward by one day.

Another problem surfaced in the issue of visas by the US Embassy, and this was not resolved until 11 am on Thursday, too late for some players to fly out with the first batch. The second flight left at 6 pm, and we arrived at

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Solving the accommodation problem

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Kennedy Airport around midnight.

Our spirits were lifted by the reception we received from the Pantrinbago North America members who had a welcome banner hoisted.

They were the persons who had alerted us to the fact that Campi planned to accommodate us at a dormitory. We had raised this with Borel the day before

departure, and he assured us that his people in New York had the situation under control.

Jasmine Garraway of the TT Tourist Board met Kerry and myself at the airport, and we had a brief meeting before she handed over to us money which represented the meal allowance for that day.

Jasmine confirmed our

worst fears about the accommodation. She disclosed that she was not allowed to inspect the facilities. We tried to get Campi, but he had already disappeared.

She advised us to get in touch with him first thing in the morning so that we could resolve the matter before checking out of the Travell Inn where we were put up for the night.

Trying to get on to

Campi was a difficult task, as he could not be located. Kerry and I checked out of our rooms, placed our luggage on the bus and went off to meet Garraway at the bank where we transacted business concerning the remainder of the Government's allocation towards the meal allowances.

MORE ON MONDAY