

Goal: Pan rising!

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GOAL! Argentina and West Germany to the final of the 1986 World Cup. As a direct result, the hotel occupancy ratio in Mexico rises a few points, and millions of dollars more flow into a beleaguered oil producer, not unlike Trinidad and Tobago. No wonder so much pressure was put on the Mexican team — even the President attended the games.

Once every four years, some country wins the bid to host a World Cup or Olympic Games. A tremendous surge of tourism and related economic activity builds up to the climatic event but benefits continue to radiate long afterwards. Countries like Mexico and South Korea capitalise on the beneficial aspects of the spectacular and build up an international image and audience.

The importance of this World Cup event to the Mexican economy in these times of falling oil prices is second only to its importance as a vehicle for building national pride, optimism and consensus.

Although not a spectator sport like football, Carnival, calypso and steelband are the sources of our well deserved reputation for creative, unpredictable, authentic spectacle. What Brazil is to football, Trinidad and Tobago is to Carnival: Notting-hill, New York's Labour Day, Caribana and several Caribbean clones derive their inspiration from Trinidad Carnival.

Foreign Exchange

Yet, our tourism potential has not been developed much less exploited; the number of visitors marginally declined in 1985 over 1984. In spite of this, tourism earns an estimated TT \$500 million in foreign exchange each year.

The importance of tourism to the Central Bank can be gauged by the absence of any specific reference to it in the annual report of the Central Bank for the year ending December 13, 1985. It is lumped with hotels and guest houses, education, community services and personal services to show a 1.1 per cent decline in 1985, a year in which the economy as a whole declined by 6.3 per cent.

In 1986, in my opinion, the fourth successive annual decline in gross domestic product can be expected at between eight and ten for the economy as a whole.

For a long time the effect of tourism policy has been to funnel people out of Trinidad while encouraging or allowing as few as possible to visit. For this reason, fiscal

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policy actively discourages local tourism.

Government owns several unprofitable hotels such as Crown Reef, Chacabana and Farrell House. It has not upgraded port facilities to international standards at Crown Point, Piarco and Scarborough. It has not simplified procedures for entry of person or goods. It has not resolved the traffic congestion in the East/West Corridor.

Finally, it has not organised and commercialised Carnival to the point where it can attract a large international audience.

Reporter: Mr Carilee, how did you enjoy your trip to that there Carnival in whatyoumaycallit island, Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr Carilee (bitterly): Expensive hotels, bad service, 16-hour marathons, late starts, bad sound systems and three hours waiting in the sun to cross the Savannah on Carnival Tuesday — these are a few of my favourite things. And not a steelband to be heard on the streets Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Sad too bad!

And that there is the essence of the tourist dilemma: how to turn a bitter carilee into a sweet sugar plum?

Recent policy announcements seem to suggest the building of new hotels and places such as Las Cuevas, the airport and Rockley Point. But I do not think shortage of rooms is a problem in Trinidad.

It is more the lack of infrastructure, a well defined product, and a mix of services and goods

that cater to recreational and leisure activities. There is also an ambivalence about tourism which can be traced to the well-held belief of the late Prime Minister that tourism is a somewhat menial occupation.

There is no shortage of rooms in Trinidad, not if you count Chacabana, the Convention Centre, the ghostly Macqueripe Hotel, Gaspar Grande, Shorelands, Valley Ranch, Kapok, Hilton, Holiday Inn and a dozen or more guest houses and hundreds of the empty apartments, townhouses and other property scattered around the western peninsula.

Deep Sea Fishing

There is no shortage of recreational facilities either, not if you count tennis courts, swimming pool, golf course, gymnasium, deep sea fishing, skiing, snorkeling, football fields, all at Chaguaramas. Abundantly rich in environmental assets, we seem intent on destroying our beaches, swamplands and hillsides.

Tobago of course is the most important cog in the wheel, but both a benefactor and beneficiary in the integration of coordinated tourism development in T&T.

What then is the engine of growth, the locomotive force from which the momentum is generated? Carnival, the answer must be Carnival, steelband and calypso.

Carnival improvement does not pander to foreign tastes but rescues our culture by removing structural obsta-



**WHO
IN
THE
KITCHEN**

By ALWIN CHOW

cles which impede the progress of the steelband and the enjoyment of Carnival. These are epitomised by the steelband.

Mobility is a major impediment. A steelband is as large as three dinosaurs and about as difficult to move.

In this guava season, many steelband sponsors are costive and finding it difficult to ease out the little cacada that they normally supply.

Carnival venues have long out-lived their usefulness. For instance, the Savannah and downtown Port-of-Spain suffer from problems of access, acoustics, and vision: serial negotiation of the Savannah stage cannot resolve the steelband's logistical dilemma. A bronthosaurus is better equipped at negotiating the narrow uneven roads, sharp right angles and potholes of Port-of-Spain than the steelband.

It just cannot work. If we want steelband back in Carnival, we just have to change the format.

Let us examine one possible solution:

1. Move the venue for the steelband at Carnival to the National Stadium and Jean Pierre Complex. Two problems spring immediately to mind — structural entry and exit limitations and probable damage of the playing surfaces.

Panorama Finals

The first calls for an engineering solution, beyond the scope of today's article; the second may be resolved by replacing the natural turf by an artificial surface. The Savannah will thank you for this because the same amount of grass and more will grow back there, where it really belongs.

2. Move the Panorama finals from Carnival Saturday to Carnival Sunday.

3. Let Panorama build up to its exciting climax, but on Carnival Sunday night. Straight from the Stadium the bands flow onto the Audrey Jeffers Highway on J'Ouvert morning to mark the new beginning of Carnival and the rebirth of the steelband.

4. Transform the land around the Audrey Jeffers Highway into a steelband oasis with pan theatres dotted around a landscaped park. Let the imagination run riot on a seafront promenade serenaded by the sonorous vibrations of the steelband, the bay atwinkle with the lights of yachts and cruise ships at anchor.

5. One hundred thousand people, masqueraders, steelbandmen and spectators, mingle happily as the bands pass freely in two directions along the smooth road. Clever ex-ists provide egress to layaway pan theatres

that form the infrastructure for year-round exhibition. Pan schools, factories and tuning all flourish here.

Above all, pan music flourishes and is carried abroad in records and instruments by devotees at their annual pilgrimage.

What a dream! But inevitably reality intrudes.

There is no change without investment. In a period of decline, it is necessary to invest. Where is this investment to come from?

Firstly, there will be no need to erect and dismantle the Independence Square stand or the North Stand. That will save a pretty penny.

Secondly, if 250,000 people click through the turnstiles of the stadium during the season at an average of \$20, that is \$5,000,000, sufficient reward for the bands and enough to provide a surplus.

More Visitors

Thirdly, foreign exchange earnings will increase as more visitors are attracted to the unique cultural extravaganza. Reggae Sunsplash earns Jamaica many millions. How many more can Carnival earn!

Foreign exchange requirements are negligible, mainly in marketing, but 90 per cent of raw materials, personal, equipment and knowhow are available locally.

The locomotive effect on the economy will be strong and long-lasting. Not only will the hotel and airline industries benefit but also construction and employment, particularly of unemployed urban youth previously mishandled by DEWD.

I have a dream that some day soon Carnival, steelband and calypso, our unique cultural heritage and achievements, will blossom and find in our own country a place in the sun.

And that next time we visit the East, the dialogue will go something like this:

"How pan?" asked the man from Japan.

"Pan in danger," said the stranger.

"What's the plan?"

"A man in a band with a hammer in he hand!"

"What's the goal?"

"Pan rising in every land!"