

COMING: A PAN FOR ALL SEASONS

and calypsonians can take the credit

By DEBBIE JACOB

CREDIT calypso with the decision to take national efforts to standardise pan. The message of Len "Boogie" Sharpe's "Pan Progress", sung by Denyse Plummer and Stalin's "Mr Pan Maker" rang loud and clear in the ears of Gene Hutchinson the Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

"When you get people singing calypsoes like "Pan Progress" and "Mr. Pan Maker" about standardising pan, we know the idea is coming from the people. And we know if Trinidad doesn't say we're standardising pan then some other country will. It is only natural that we as a nation should standardise and document all aspects of the steel pan and should lead the rest of the world in this area. Standardising pan is now a priority

of the Bureau of Standards and we have to get on with it," said Hutchinson.

The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards formulates and maintains national standards for goods and services in this country. Standards are agreed measures of criteria of efficiency or performance. The Bureau of

Standards says the standardisation of pan will facilitate the playing of the steel pan, establish the quality of the material used in making the pan and reduce the cost in producing a steel pan.

Standards can be voluntary or compulsory. In the case of pan, both the Bureau of Standards and Pan Trinbago President Arnim Smith agree

that the standards should be voluntary.

The Bureau of Standards will be depending on a committee to reach a decision on exactly how pan will be standardised.

Members of committee are Pat Bishop, musical arranger; Owen Serrette, Pan Trinbago; Bertie Marshall and Leo Coker, tuners; Richard McDavid, mechanical engineer; Mario Fuller, Metal Industries Co. Ltd.; Ray Holman, arranger/player; Anthony Williams, Ministry of Youth, Sport, Culture and Creative Arts; Everard Llewellyn and Leslie Pichery of the Bureau of Standards; and Hubi Wilson of Van Leer Containers.

Hutchinson said that in about one year, we could expect some standards set for pan.

"I would estimate it would take about six months for formulating a document, three months for public comment and three months to refine the document after public comments come in," said Hutchinson. "By this time next year we should have something on the books about standardisation of pan."



In the meantime, the standardisation of pan is being embraced by Pan Trinbago.

"It's long overdue. We are grateful the Bureau of Standards took the initiative," said Smith. Pan Trinbago has had three conventions in an attempt to standardise pan. Nothing concrete ever came of those talks.

Smith said he estimates only about five per cent of the steelbandmen in Trinidad and Tobago are against standardisation. One pannist/arranger who is most happy about the decision is Ray Holman. "Standardisation is necessary if we're going to promote the instrument internationally. Standardisation is also necessary for us to teach pan in the schools. It will take time. But everything takes time. Look how long it took for people to convert to the metric system," said Holman.

Holman said the standardisation of pan would not inhibit individual creativity in any aspect of pan. "There will still be room for individual pans to be made. It will not affect the tuners. They can adapt. Most people will be ready to adapt," said Holman who pointed out that some of the pans are already very close to being standardised. "The second pan is one," he said.

Like Smith, Holman is not bothered by those who oppose standardising pan. "I'm sure all instruments went th-

rough the same stages we are going through before they were standardised," said Holman. "Look how long those other instruments have been around and the pan has been around about 50 years. That is a very short time," said Holman. "What we have to remember is that standardisation doesn't mean change. It just means

that we will document the instrument and make a national standard," said Everard Llewellyn, head of the Standards Writing Division.

"People will accept standardisation," Holman assured. "There will be a gradual phasing in of people. But one thing is for certain. Children won't question it."