

OUR OPINION

Sponsors help to uplift our culture

WHEN Royal Bank and Pan Trinbago recently launched Pan is Beautiful V — the World Steelband Festival, one of the bank's officials made the point that his company was committed to ploughing its profits back into the country from whence those profits came.

The same could justifiably be said for the National Brewing Company, brewers of Stag Lager Beer. Over the last two to three years there have been an upsurge of cultural events sponsored by the brewing company, all of them dedicated to the upliftment and continuation of indigenous art forms. The latest venture is a repeat, in a way, of an idea spawned to commemorate last year's 25th Independence anniversary — that hugely successful calypso competition which generated such interest and also provided the country with one of its best ever calypso shows on the final night.

This time around the company has shelled out at least \$50,000 in prizes alone and has asked the calypsonians to follow a theme which is not only challenging but thought provoking at this time — *Youth and the Nation*. Another interesting facet of this year's promotion is a workshop for judges at which any number of matter relating to judging will be thrashed out. The object according to the organisers is for the public to have a greater understanding of the judge's function as well as for judges themselves to examine existing criteria and explore new possibilities for the judging of the art form.

This promises to be a most interesting exercise and could prove to be just as important as the actual contest. It also shows that there are thinking people out there who have their fingers on the pulse of

problems affecting the art form and seeking ways to ventilate the issues at the heart of the problem. Nearly every cultural competition that is held in this country has been wracked by controversy over the results and this is undoubtedly because culture presents peculiar subjective problems. Therefore any attempt to iron out these kinks should be wholeheartedly welcomed.

The calypsonians on the other hand must be pleased that yet another opportunity is presented to them to display their creative talents. The era of the calypso season is now firmly behind us and some credit must be paid here to the National Action Cultural Committee whose unstinting efforts during the rough days paved the way for the situation today.

And today we have three competitions including extempore, with prize money totalling close to quarter million dollars. This healthy situation for the artistes is due to the investment of both Stag and the BUCKS organisation who have returned to the fray after three years.

Cultural afficianados are therefore in for a treat as in one year we will have three calypso competitions and the steelband festival. It is the sort of entertainment which we should let the world know about because apart from being the initiators of both art forms we possess the leading exponents as well, a fact the Tourist Board will do well to consider and capitalise upon in the coming eight months.

We wish all the organisations well in their ventures and urge the public to continue to support these manifestations of excellence in our people showing that we stand proudly as the land of steelband and calypso.