

Local steelband industry planned 5 years ago

GOVT BLAMED FOR BRITISH MADE 'PANS'

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THE GOVERNMENT of Trinidad and Tobago has been blamed for allowing a British firm to take the initiative in making the production of steelpans a full-pledged industry.

The charge was made by Mr. Krishna Narinesingh, a solicitor attached to the San Fernando law firm of Laurence, Narinesingh and Company.

Mr. Narinesingh disclosed that five years ago, a group of "concerned citizens" got together and decided that steelbandmen should be motivated into working productively on a large scale—that is if they were provided with the opportunity to work at the things they enjoyed doing.

A company

Said he: "In October, 1968, it was decided to develop a Steelband Instrument Industry geared for both the local and foreign markets, and towards creating productive employment among the young men involved in the steelband movement. "It was proposed to organise a company on a fully commercial basis, to train young men to manufacture, tune and otherwise produce steelpans and accessories, to teach pan music, to manage their own affairs, and generally to produce and export steelpans as any other sophisticated manufactured product."

Mr. Narinesingh added that there was to be a restriction on the transfer of shares so that the company could not be "raided by unscrupulous operators, and control of the company taken out of the hands of the shareholders, who, in the main were to be youth involved in the steelband movement".

Project

He disclosed that the directors were also to be members of the steelband movement involved in the project, and were to have the right to appoint to the Board people with the necessary dedication, technical know-how, and other qualifications for rendering assistance.

He revealed that the



MR. Narinesingh (left) and Mr. Forde sign the visitors' book in the office of the Mayor of Croydon during their 1970 visit, while the mayor (right) looks on.

By RODERICK LEWIS,
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group promoting the project comprised:

- Youth from a depressed area who were members of a steelband sponsored by a well-known manufacturer and whose talents have now become internationally famous;

- A company with expertise in the manufacture of steel drums;

- A highly diversified local conglomerate with expertise and experience in the organisation of production lines and costings;
- An eminent and public-spirited professor of engineering who would have arranged metallurgical research and designs;

- A representative of a well-known international corporation who was then stationed in Trinidad, and who had arranged export outlets and publicity in the United States;

- A commercial attache

of a foreign mission who had the ability to promote export of the products;

- A reputable firm of chartered accountants, and

- A reputable firm of lawyers.

Mr. Narinesingh pointed out that since the steelband was part of the country's heritage, such a pan industry should not be promoted merely as a commercial venture of the private sector, but that there should be a certain involvement by Government in order to ensure preservation of the cultural image in the process of development of the industry.

Private

He further pointed out that since most, if not all, of the shareholders from the private sector would be members of the steelband movement, capital would be short and Government could play a

vital role in matching the financial contributions of the private sector by providing accommodation for the industry, promoting it abroad through its overseas and local agencies, and mobilising the assistance of the national airline, BWIA.

The solicitor added that in 1970 he and the late Mr. Hugh Forde of the Industrial Development Corporation toured England and reviewed the project with, among others the mayor of Croydon (the city where the first steelband factory is to be soon housed) in the course of promoting joint business ventures.

Mr. Narinesingh revealed that Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams, "enthusiastically received" the idea of setting up a steelband factory in Trinidad and "swiftly directed action by the appropriate Government department".

"But alas!" he moaned, "not a drum was heard, not a steelpan note of the plan which was then being 'studied'".

Mr. Narinesingh saw the delay by this Government department in instituting measures for the establishment of the pan factory as being responsible for a foreign company getting the jump ahead of us.