



A CROSS SECTION OF DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE STEELBAND YESTERDAY.

Panmen at consultation call for a better life

By JOHN BABB

STEELBANDSMEN yesterday poured out their problems to Government hoping that solutions could be found for an improved life for them and their art form.

They complained of numerous problems — from difficulty in getting a panyard to practice, to employment opportunities, to a pan tuner's brain drain.

The complaints came from the majority of 93 steelbands who had representatives attending the opening day of the three-day Government-sponsored National Consultation on the Steelband, at the Chaguramas Convention Centre.

The panmen's litany of complaints was launched in a vigorous opening speech by Mr. Roy Augustus, President of the national body — Pan Trinbago.

He opened up with a criticism of Government for awarding the Trinity Cross to Garfield Sobers, and not to the inventor of the steelpan.

Representatives of Tobago bands called for special works projects to provide employment for panmen on the island.

They also suggested more massive use of steelbands at sporting events, the race-tracks, cinemas, and tourist venues like the Governor General grounds and Maracas Bay.

Like some of their colleagues in Trinidad, the Tobago panmen said they were also faced with the problem

of not getting paid in their jobs when they were given time off to play.

Mr. Barry Yeates, of Textel Am-Boys said the National Cultural Council should prepare literature on pan and produce documentary films.

He attacked the NCC, which he described as "one man working on a book," and asked: "What does it do for the Steelband?"

Mr. Yeates accused the "bigshots" of using the steelbands for selfish purposes.

He suggested trade courses for panmen "en masse" to equip them to get jobs.

More radio time

A representative of the Trinidad Lake Asphalt steelband complained of pan tuners being encouraged to leave the country by being able to earn more outside.

WASA Silvertones complained of WASA itself not having work for its panmen, even after some of them were persuaded to join a union, to qualify for employment.

They also complained of inadequate sponsorship arrangements.

Cordettes of Sangre Grande complained of panmen being swindled by the recording companies, and called on television to pay for band appearances.

A representative of Boystown suggested that the radio stations play more steelband music, giving lesser known

bands more exposure to the public.

Mr. John Makham, of Sylvania East Side Symphony, complained of the problem of acceptance by their own home society in San Juan.

Mr. Gary Simmons suggested that panmen be trained to get gainful employment, and hinted at an agricultural scheme as an avenue of employment.

Mr. Joseph Renaud, of Solo Harmonites, called on Government to make contractual arrangements to protect bands and ensure that they are paid by the promoters.

He blamed panmen for their preference to "soul" music rather their own, and queried: "How many of them buy steelband records instead of soul?"

The Tobago panmen also complained about the lack of technical and qualified musical advice — unlike their Trinidad counterparts.

Mr. Rudolph Charles believed Government already knew what should be done to help the panmen, since in 1968 an industry was proposed to employ hundreds of panmen. He had also discussed the problem with the Prime Minister in 1970.

Mr. Charles charged that the panmen were still like "little boys, going around beg-

Continued on Page 6

ML 1040