

PRIEST TALKS ON PAN

MUSICALLY speaking, what is the steelband?

There are some musicians who still regard it as a novelty, an inferior medium that is doomed to same but never achieve full musical maturity.

There are others who see the steelband in the same limited light as the calypso—good "folk stuff", but nothing more.

And happily there are those such as Fr. John Sewell who consider the steelband one of the authentic musical phenomena of the century, a fresh and exciting medium whose musical integrity is as sound as the symphony orchestra and whose limitations are only those of its players.

"Every musical instrument is limited in one way or another," says Fr. Sewell who recognised the beauty, worth and potential of the steelband shortly after his arrival in Trinidad in July, 1963.

"Take the piano, for instance, you can't pick it up and put it in your pocket."

Harmoniously the young Anglican priest from South Wales who, as an organ scholar for three of his undergraduate years, became involved in the pan. He not only gave the steelband generously of his musical knowledge, but opened the doors of the Trinity Cathedral to the Forsyth Highlanders on Independence Day 1965—an historic breakthrough in the musical progress of the pan.

evolved to the point where its future progress demands more than just the abundance of raw talent which has brought it out of the backyards of east Port-of-Spain into international concert stage.

Steelbandmen must now aim at musical virtuosity, says Fr. Sewell.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the steelband has a place in the world of music, but before it can fully occupy that place steelbandmen must become musicians, not just experts in handling two sticks.

"Any steelband going on an extended tour suffers from an enormous handicap if it cannot expand or replenish its repertoire at will. In fact, I am sure that Liberace never guessed that members of the Trinidad Tripoli cannot read music.

"This, it is true, makes the final product even more amazing but tends to keep the steelband at the level of a novelty rather than a serious contribution to the world of music.

"Not all the classics can be arranged for the steelband" Fr. Sewell appreciates. "The very nature of

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"Mr. Evans is a composer who knows the potential of the pan and is writing accordingly. This is the kind of music the steelband needs: its own."

After repeated appeals from Tripoli for his services as musical director and conductor, Fr. Sewell flies out shortly after Easter to join the band in Los Angeles.

Now touring the United States with Liberace, Trinidad Tripoli is fully contracted to the American pianist for the rest of the year and the band is sorely in need of Fr. Sewell who has been its musical

Reviewing their performance, the Deseret News of Salt Lake City of January 21 enthuses:

"The Trinidad band is probably one of the most sensational supporting groups Liberace has had with him. He has had lovely girl singers but no one has caused the excitement that resulted from the appearance of this group."

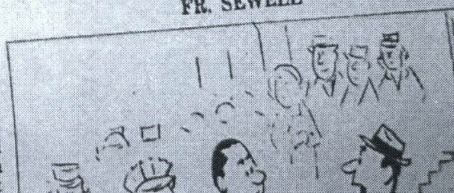
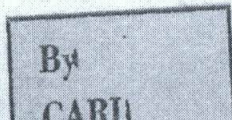
Tripoli's present tour, in fact, is the most extensive ever made by a Trinidad steelband and is likely to be extended to England and Europe after covering the U.S.

Since the band's historic appearance at Expo 69, in fact, Tripoli has been performing mostly abroad.

The Trinidad steelband gave memorable performances at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts—a musical concert



FR. SEWELL



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