

JUDGES UNDER FIRE BY TOP PANORAMA BANDS

By SELWYN CARR SOCIAL AFFAIRS REPORTER

ANGRY steelbandmen last night hotly criticised music-loving Anglican priest Father John Sewell as he sought in vain to explain the criteria used to select the 16 bands for the semi-finals of the Panorama competition.

After more than three hours of loud bickering at

the office of the Carnival Development Committee (CDC) on Queen Street, Port of Spain the semi-finals of the competition seemed to hang in the balance as regards the number of bands that will eventually take part.

The panmen made it plain to the three-man panel of

judges and Mr. Bertie Fraser, president of Pan Trinbago, that four more bands should be included in the semi-finals next week or as much as 15 more.

They listed the four bands as Sylvania East Side, WITCO Gay Desperadoes, CIBC Starlift and AMOCO Renegades - the big name bands which were left out in the cold after Sunday

night's end of the preliminaries at the savannah.

Mr. Fraser said last night that no decision was reached and Father Sewell suggested that other judges be appointed to sit in at the semi-finals which will show whether there were any grounds for a number of allegations levelled against him and his two fellow judges - Mr. Clive Alexander (who was

present at the meeting) and Mr. Steve Christian of San Fernando, who was not at the meeting.

The steelbandmen, seemingly annoyed that certain bands were left out of the semi-finals, mounted a protest on Monday claiming that the score-sheets were not available to them.

Put their main grouse was that they wanted to know the system used to award points, and Father Sewell agreed to explain. However, he never got that chance as the meeting turned out to be one of wild allegations against the judges, Mr. Fraser and the CDC.

Newsmen learnt that the criteria comprised a points system based on arrangement (35); interpretation (40); and tone/colour (25) - with each of the three judges entitled to award a maximum of 100 points.

Doubts

Father Sewell emphatically denied that the score-sheets were withheld and declared that they were handed to Mr. Fraser after Sunday night's show.

Asked who was in control of the judges, Mr. Fraser gave them the name of a CDC official to which the panmen wanted to know what he was doing with them.

Allegations of tampering and political collusion were levelled wildly by the panmen.

Later the score-sheets were brought in from the office of the CDC and panmen began going through them, only to come up with further allegations of "tampering" and "changes".

Some steelbandmen even questioned the big jump in the points awarded from 240 down to 228, to which Father Sewell said "I commented upon that myself."

Father Sewell, who has shown interest in the steelband movement for the past 12 years, declared that in view of the grave doubts expressed about "myself and the other judges, it would be difficult for us to go into the semi-final," and suggested that other judges be appointed to dispel such doubts.

Panmen and even Mr.

Alexander suggested that in view of the number of bands which took part in the preliminaries (79 out of 82 that were registered took part), the number chosen for the semi-finals should be increased.

Mr. Rudolph Charles, leader of the WITCO Despers, who attended the meeting, said his band was abiding by the decision of the judges, but commented: "We are satisfied that our performance on Saturday merited inclusion among the 16 bands."

"Like many other bands, we are entitled to see the score sheets", he said.

Ruling on tattoo stickers today

WHETHER "Funstick" tattoo stickers are injurious to health or not is expected to be known today when the government chemist delivers his findings to Dr. Elizabeth Quamina, acting Chief Medical Officer of Health.

This was revealed yesterday after a meeting with Mr. Val Thomas, manager of Super Pack Company - the Charlotte Street, Port of Spain distributor of the stickers - and Dr. Quamina and acting government chemist Walter Celestain.

It followed launching of an enquiry by Mr. Kamaluddin Mohammed, Health Minister amid reports that the stickers were a danger to health and reports, which the Ministry checked and found untrue, that two children had died because of use of the stickers.

At the meeting, Mr. Thomas submitted the results of an analysis carried out by the government of Spain, where the stickers are manufactured. This showed that the colourful imitation tattoos contained lead and copper of one part per million each.

The tattoos which depict animals, cars, comical teeth and other objects can be stuck anywhere and in recent weeks were being widely used as body decorations by both children and adults.

In the face of what was described as a "potential threat", the Ministry advised people to be careful in their use of the new fad.



FATHER JOHN SEWELL (STANDING) LAST NIGHT, SEATED ARE JUDGE CLIVE ALEXANDER AND MR BERTIE FRASER PRESIDENT OF PAN TRINBAGO. NEXT TO HIM IS A MEMBER OF A BAND THAT TOOK PART IN THE PANORAMA PRELIMINARIES. INSET: A SECTION OF THE CROWD THAT ATTENDED YESTERDAY'S PANMEN'S MEETING AT THE CDC OFFICE.

PICTURES BY WAHID BAKSH.