

UWI checkmated on pan development

By JOHN BABB

THE FACULTY of Engineering at the University of the West Indies has reached a barrier in its work to develop the steelpan as an instrument.

"We can go no further unless we can benefit from the knowledge of the people who really know about the steelband — that is, the tuners and arrangers," said the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Kenneth Julien.

Speaking at yesterday's session of the National Consultation on the Steelband at the Chaguanas Convention Centre, Dr. Julien said the Faculty now needed the help, assistance and guidance of the pan tuners and arrangers if it was to make further progress in its work.

Earlier, Dr. Julien pledged formally to make available at all times to the steelband movement all the facilities — both personnel and equipment — at the Faculty, to assist in the further development of the steelband.

Calling for the help of the pan tuners and arrangers, Dr. Julien told the Consultation: "We at the University have reached the stage where it is difficult to go further unless we have the intimate involvement of the tuners and arrangers of the pans.

"We want further definitions — whether we shall go further; how best we can co-operate; and whether there was the need

Assistance of tuners, arrangers needed

to take our work further than we already have done."

He made no apologies for the UWI Paper on the steelband — a progress report — being too technical because, as he noted, "the steelband instrument is one of the most complex type instruments."

Commenting on the work of the Faculty, Dr. Julien said they had just "scratched the surface in understanding how music is made from the instrument."

On the question of standardisation of the pan, Dr. Julien preferred not to take sides, following arguments for and against.

Dr. Julien supplied food for thought when he reminded the Consultation that they could not talk in one breath about the factory-type production of pans, and then say no degree of standardisation.

Tremendous task

Further development of the instrument, he noted, was a tremendous task, and suggested that a positive organisation, either a Foundation or Trust, be set up to get things done.

In the light of the varied discussions on standardisation, Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, as Chairman of the Consultation, appointed a 12-man Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Julien to study the matter, and come up with a report as quickly as possible.

The Committee, which comprised Supt. A. Prospect, Mr. Max Cuffie, Mr. Curtis Pierre, Mr. D. Holder, Mr. Tony Williams, Mr. Edwin Bartlett, Mr. L. London, Mr. N. Moraldo, Mr. J. Rosemund, Mr. J. Jemmott and Mr. Winston "Spree" Simon, completed its deliberations yesterday, and its report will be released today — the final day of the Consultation.

The Consultation later proceeded to deal with the Steelband and its Sponsors and several criticisms were levelled

at some sponsors.

However, a few of them came in for some praise. But no firm conclusions were reached on this issue, which the Prime Minister regarded as "a very serious problem."

As Chairman, he noted, while winding up the discussion period, that so long as the steelband cannot operate solely on its own resources then it seemed that there was some continuing need for sponsorship.

The problem in the country was the smaller firms, which either could not afford, or simply refused to contribute, or, at worse, could not be bothered with the question of making some contribution in the field of sponsorship.

There was also the question of the smaller band in an area of operation, where the necessities were not of the level of the larger bands, especially if such small band was concerned with a small firm whose advertising scope was not as great as a big-name firm.

Another problem which Dr. Williams cited was an issue involving one of the bands, where difficulties with a sponsor led to the confiscation of the equipment of the band, although part of the equipment was donated by the Prime Minister's Office.

However, because of the legal non-status of the band, the Prime Minister's Office could take no action.

This, said Dr. Williams, raised the important issue of incorporation of the band.

Since there were three parties involved — the steelband, the business community, and Government, — the Prime Minister announced the appointment of a Tripartite Committee, to deal with a number of issues.

Composition of the committee will be a chairman from the Prime Minister's Office; a Legal Adviser from the Attorney General's Department.

Also, three steelband representatives selected by Pan Trinbago; one representative

from the Tobago Association; three representatives selected by the Prime Minister's Office from non-urban, non-sponsored bands, taking into consideration the geography of the country, including one from Tobago; two private sector sponsors; one public sector sponsor, and two representatives from the Businessmen's Association, outside of the sponsoring firms.

This committee will consider specifically the role of the business community in promoting and encouraging the steelband with particular reference to the following questions:—

- Standardisation of contract as a guideline, taking into account the different types of firms and different types of

bands and the areas in which the bands operate;

- Incorporation of individual steelbands;

- Possible establishment of a Central Services Fund for unsponsored bands, to which contributions, in certain circumstances, could be tax deductible. This fund to deal particularly with drums and other equipment, tuning and arranging and general expenses, especially transport and panyards — all in the interest of the unsponsored bands.

The committee would seek to invite any and every sponsored steelband on supply information about the nature of their sponsorship as a guide.

The Consultation winds up at midday today following discussions on the future of the steelband.

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