

# UNITED CULTURAL FRONT

IN DECEMBER 1980, Pan Trinbago made a call for a united approach to problems facing the various cultural art forms of Trinidad and Tobago. This call was made in view of the crisis situation that had developed over the years which is now threatening the existence and continued development of the art form and the artistes themselves. The major tasks outlined were to challenge this misdirection and misconception and establish the art forms in true and proper perspectives, within the framework of the interests of society as a whole.

## HISTORIC PROBLEMS

Steelbandsmen, Calypsonians, Musicians, Dramatists, Poets, Writers, Dancers to name a few continue to face the historical problems of recognition from the authorities, lack of facilities, finance, media projections, scarcity of meaningful activities, exploitation, brain drain, international recognition etc. It is almost impossible for one to imagine how these art forms and their exponents can survive and make their contribution to the society, while these fundamental issues remain unresolved. The truth is that were it not for the individual initiative of the artistes our nation would not be able to stand above others in the field of art and culture on the international scene.

## FRUSTRATIONS

While our local artistes have struggled admirably for the preservation of our indigenous art forms and expressions few were able to escape the volume of frustrations that have surrounded these efforts. The result is that many have migrated to foreign lands in search of avenues to explore their own talents and capabilities.

## SUICIDE

Another source of frustration is the attitude of the electronic media as regards the projection of local cultural events.

While Pan Trinbago Christmas presentation to the nation "Carol and Classics on Steel" was taking place at the Jean Pierre

Complex, Trinidad and Tobago Television rejected this and in its place presented a 'Perry Como Special.' This is consistent with their policy of a nightly bombardment of anything that is foreign as against a token inclusion of a local production every now and again.

The radio service too is guilty of this suicide, for local musical creations are seemingly placed back on the shelves as from Ash Wednesday morning. No real established policy as regards the projecting of local art-forms to the people has been undertaken by either of the electronic media, so then it would follow that the society cannot fully appreciate the works of art of our artistes in their competition against their foreign counterparts.

## UNITED APPROACH

A United Cultural Front, made up of representatives of each art-form (steelband, Calypso, Dance, Drama, Musicians, Mas Players, Writers, Indian Culture, etc.), will undertake the responsibility for solving these historic problems. The individual groups who are in daily contact with their own hardships and that of their members are best placed to deal with the establishment of policies to direct the development of these art-forms.

A united approach to the wider questions, such as, facilities for performing research, a library, a music school, technical equipment, programmes for schools and joint presentation (Pan through the Eyes of the Calypsonian, Champs in Concert, Carnival Celebrations, Music in School etc.) will be the main task of the Front.

## ART FOR THE ARTISTES

As it now exists, civil servants with no relationships with any of the art-forms, are those who make all decisions and policies, related to art and culture in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact the Government has no less than six (6) separate agencies to deal with art and culture, all of which

are subject to bureaucracy, tokenism, political intrigue and lip-service all contributing to the crisis situation in life of the art and its exponents.

## NO CONFIDENCE IN C.D.C.

The composition and function of the Carnival Development Committee has been a perpetual source of frustration and confusion for those artistes involved in the annual Carnival celebrations. The calypsonians have always expounded their feelings in song (Chalkdust, Shadow, Explainer etc.). This year for example, in every Calypso Tent, there were at least three renditions challenging the decadence and frustration caused by the C.D.C. Pan Trinbago too, is already of the opinion that Carnival celebrations cannot be run by their Civil Servants, simply because they cannot appreciate and come to terms with the human, economic and creative efforts that go into the Carnival Season. Steelbandsmen over the years have continually expressed no confidence in the Carnival Development Committee whose interests are not consistent with the development of any art-form what-so-ever, especially that of the steelband.

## CULTURE CANNOT BE PART OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

\* There are other agen-

cies that in name sound impressive but in fact contribute nothing to alleviate the pressures brought to bear on our artistes: the National Foundation of Art and Culture, National Cultural Council, Division of Culture, Community Development and the Best Village Programme. Again they are run as part of the Civil Service and have no real links with the art and artistes therefore they remain as 'Castles in the Sky.'

## SAVE OUR CULTURE

The United Cultural Front will now be charged with the responsibility for the future development of the cultural art forms which are indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago. Each individual organisation will have their own representatives on the United Cultural Front Committee and collectively plan and implement programmes of activities based on the historic needs of the member organisations, and the collective needs of the United Cultural Front. Pan Trinbago is now taking the initial steps in communicating with all the various groups representing the different art-forms. By the time this article is being read, a preliminary meeting would have taken place to establish the machinery to set the United Cultural Front in motion.

## ATTENTION!

**PANMEN & WOMEN.  
THIS IS YOUR PAPER,**

**MAKE A  
CONTRIBUTION.**

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