

Last Wednesday's "Issues And Ideas" was a neat demonstration of how not to run a talk show. The subject was the future of pan: a big, important topic, of interest to most viewers, especially in this Carnival season; the moderator (John Cupid) and the two guests (Jack Alexis and Jomo Watuse) both care and know about it; and there was even a performance by a school steelband using "mini-pans". And yet what came out of it all was hardly

Let's start again — what is the future of pan?

more than half an hour of rambling old-talk.

To start with, there was a thick smokescreen of platitudes about pan and what a great and wonderful thing it is; O.K., maybe there are still doubters. But pan was next hailed as

phenomenon: ah yes, someone said knowingly, I agree that pan is a phenomenon, and all nodded approvingly. Next step: pan should be seen as economical, according to Alexis, looking through a businessman's eye; and pan should be seen as technological, according to Watuse, looking through a tuner's.

Then ensued a hilarious retreat from the topic, as one side upheld the virtues of economy over technology and the other the opposite. The moderator of course should have stamped on all this at once, demanding to know what was meant by economical and technological pans, trying to put his guests in touch with each other, and ensuring full discussion of both aspects.

GREAT SHAME

Both, after all, are going to be important to the steelband movement, once you can understand what they mean. But to his great shame the moderator didn't do this, and instead blandly watched the argument wallowing deeper and deeper into abstraction as the minutes ticked past. So that by the time some concrete points began to emerge, there was no time for

them. The arguments for and against the standardisation of steelbands; the position of steelbands outside Carnival; the effectiveness of the sponsorship system; the frustration of panmen; steelbands as co-operatives; none of this got discussed.

The moderator did once try to press the question of exactly how progress could be made with recordings, shows and out-of-season recognition, but failed to cut through the subsequent rambling. Towards the end of the programme, even more interesting questions were casually thrown up: the alleged deterioration in the quality of steel, the need for a greater range of notes, anxiety over the movement's utter dependence on an endless supply of 45-gallon drums, the psychological burden of the myths of "indiscipline" and "lack of business sense" — but not one of these topics was pursued.

Nor was there any reference to current plans for a Pan Theatre, nor even the "mini-pans" in the studio



Itself: how seriously are they to be taken? "I know you agree," said the moderator once, as viewers' hopes rose, "But WHAT exactly is keeping things back?" Even then, he didn't get an answer. How to get pan taken seriously in schools; whether the next steps must come from inside or outside the movement — silence. It was a glorious opportunity to speak out, and it was wasted: lack of preparation, lack of communication, inability to select a point and stick to it — these elementary errors ruined what should have been a major contribution to public consciousness of pan and its needs.

Earlier the same evening, Rex Nettleford was given an absurdly brief interview on "Panorama"; Gerald Agostini asked him the obvious questions about Jamaica, what's going on culturally and socially, preparations for Carifesta, etc. But Nettleford, Jamaica's best-known artist, the Jamaican Prime Minister's Cultural Adviser, architect of cultural policy, and a superb talker as well, could surely have passed on some lessons from his experience in this vital area. Can a government, or a single cultural organisation, really galvanise the arts, or does all the momentum have

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