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By JOHN BABB

New efforts begin today TG

PROBLEMS confronting the steelband will be aired on yet another occasion when the three-day Government - sponsored National Consultation on the Steelband, opens today at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre.

These problems are not unknown, for they have been aired over and over at different levels during the past decade.

Dating back to December 9, 1962, a delegation comprising Mr. George Yeates, Mr. George Kangalee, Mr. George Beckles, Mr. George Goddard (a delegation of the Georges) and Mr. Kenrick Thomas met with Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams at White Hall. They discussed the problems and submitted certain proposals.

Dr. Williams asked the delegation to "put it in writing." This was done shortly after.

As a result, Dr. Williams appointed a Steelband Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Ralph Romain, who then was attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture.

After investigating the steelband movement, Dr. Romain submitted recommendations late in 1963 to the Prime Minister.

The following year — 1964 — the Carnival Development Committee (CDC) set up a Sub-Committee on the Steelband.

This was done in the wake of a request from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the CDC to think in terms of developing a Steelband and Calypso Theatre to operate

outside of the Carnival season.

The sub-committee was headed by Mr. Andrew Carr, and included Mr. Sam Ghany, the late George Bailey and Mr. George Goddard.

Recommendations of the sub-committee were ratified by the CDC in 1963, and submitted to Government, via the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In 1966, the Prime Minister appointed another committee — this time, under the chairmanship of Mr. M. P. Alladin, Director of Culture, to probe the problems of the steelband.

The committee submitted recommendations in 1967.

From October, 1968, one-

time President of the now defunct National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandsmen (NATTS), Mr. George Goddard was employed by Government as an Adviser on the improvement of steelband music.

Mr. Goddard submitted recommendations in 1969.

Over the years, between 1962 and 1971, the Steelbands' Association — the panmen's body — submitted a number of proposals to Government on what should be done to assist the steelbands.

In January, 1970, the Prime Minister set up another committee — this time, headed by Mr. Max Cuffie, and gave the committee six weeks in

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The recommendations were
submitted to the Prime Minis-
ter late February, 1970.

In March and April, 1970,
the Prime Minister held five
meetings — separately — at
his residence in St. Ann's with
representatives of more than
100 steelbands throughout
Trinidad and Tobago.

At these meetings, further
discussions were held on the
Max Cuffie Report, as well as
a document in relation to
sponsorship, which was pre-
pared by an official in the
Ministry of Planning and
Development.

A number of decisions were
taken at these meetings, in-

cluding one to set up a Co-
operative with the sponsored
steelbands, with the sponsors
buying shares on behalf of
the panmen, but having no
say in the operation of the
co-operative.

There was also a decision
to establish a pan-manufactur-
ing factory, and to set up a
Steelband Research Council,
under the chairmanship of the
panmen's body president, and
to include pan-tuners, repre-
sentatives of the Industrial
Development Corporation
(IDC), a qualified musician,
and a representative from the
Faculty of Engineering at the
University of the West Indies.

During 1970, the Prime
Minister also made several
visits to panyards, and donated

drum ("traps") sets to some
bands.

Despite the many ups and
downs, the steelband move-
ment managed for four years
to physically exhibit a sem-
blance of oneness with a
National band which came
into being in 1963, and
functioned effectively until
Montreal's Expo in 1967.

It started with the for-
mation of one representative
from 44 different steelbands.
But later the formation was
halved to one representative
from 22 different steelbands
throughout the country.

It comprised 22 members on
overseas performances, and
for local performances, the
membership would swell to 38

— each member from a dif-
ferent steelband.

The National Steelband per-
formed in Europe; for the
Festival of Britain in 1965;
also in the United States as
guests of Moral Re-Armament
(MRA) in 1964, performing in
13 States on that tour. It also
performed at Expo in Montreal
in 1967.

The band also performed
locally at functions for rep-
resentatives of foreign govern-
ments visiting Trinidad from
time to time. These VIPs in-
cluded the Queen and Presi-
dent Leopold Senghor of
Senegal.

The panmen's body was, and
still is hard-pressed for
funds.

When it functioned as an
association it received two
loans from Government —
one of \$4,200 to send the
National Steelband to the
United States in 1964. This

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loan was paid off, plus the interest.

The panmen received another loan — one for \$1,600 in 1968 to help the association finance its Steelbands' Music Festival. This loan has not been paid back, and is understood to have been written off by Government.

Legally, NATTS has not been dissolved. Under its constitution, dissolution had to come by way of a resolution passed by two-thirds of the membership, but this resolution was never passed. How-

ever, NATTS no longer exists.

In its place, the panmen now have Pan Trinbago, which has since been officially registered.

The panmen's governing body was first established in 1949 as the Steelband's Association; it became the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandsmen (NATTS) in 1966, and now there is Pan Trinbago.

Past presidents were : Mr. Sydney Gallop of Crusaders — from 1949 to 1955;

Nathaniel Crichlow of City Syncopators — from 1955 to 1957;

George Goddard of Casablanca — from 1957 to 1959;

Albert Jones of City Kids — from 1959 to 1960;

Junior Pouchet of Silver Stars — from 1960 to 1961;

Cecil Hunte of Playboys — from 1961 to 1962;

George Goddard (not representing any band) — from 1962 to 1971, when NATTS folded.

Panmen began participating in the organising of Panorama in 1963 — the same year in which they went on their own to hold their Music Festival. They held similar festivals in 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1968.

Prior to that, panmen took part in the Music Festivals organised by the Trinidad Music Association (TMA), until the TMA decided to throw them out in 1962.

This decision came in the

wake of a misunderstanding that developed on the night the bands were due to perform at Queen's Hall. The show started 90 minutes late.

To help launch the panmen off on their own Music Festivals, the Prime Minister donated a trophy, and the following year, the CDC donated two trophies.

Today, the three-day talks open at the Convention Centre under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister himself.

Where will this consultation lead the panmen, who, from inception has beaten a weary path from "outcast" to officialdom?

Maybe this is the crucial point. We will see.