

THE NEAR FIASCO IN ARIMA

THE ARIMA PANORAMA is an annual event hosted by the Arima Carnival Improvement Committee (A.C.I.C.), at the Arima Velodrome. Pan Lovers attending the shows have always been more than satisfied with the performances of the bands taking part. On the other hand apart from headache and frustration, the panmen and women had only the joy of performing for their relatives, friends and supporters, since the meagre financial returns could hardly begin to do justice to their contribution - a contribution not summed up in one night's performance, but in the months of hardwork and practice.

EARLY NEGOTIATIONS

In January 1980, the Eastern Region of Pan Trinbago made representation to the A.C.I.C., on behalf of the steelbands taking part in the Arima Panorama. A joint management committee was set up comprising of A.C.I.C. members, members of the steelbands involved and a Pan Trinbago official, but because of the time constraint not much could have been done to improve the situation in 1980. With this experience in mind as early as October 1980, the Eastern Region corresponded with the mayor of Arima on the issue of Arima Panorama 1981. However, efforts to have discussions with the mayor, in his capacity as chairman of the A.C.I.C. were not successful until January 6th 1981. At this meeting a budget was agreed on catering for twelve (12) Conventional Bands and three (3) Ole Time Steelbands. This included two (2) bands from Sangre Grande and five bands from Five Rivers, Tacarigua and Tunapuna, which traditionally took part in the Arima Panorama at one time or another. The event was carded for Wednesday 25th February, 1981.

The budget was as follows:-

i. Conventional Bands:	1st Place	=\$ 5,000.00
	2nd Place	=\$ 4,500.00
	3rd Place	=\$ 4,000.00
	4th Place	=\$ 3,500.00
5th to 12th Place		=\$ 2,500.00ea
TOTAL		=\$37,000.00
ii. Ole Time Bands:	1st Place	=\$ 2,000.00
	2nd Place	=\$ 1,500.00
	3rd Place	=\$ 1,000.00
		\$ 4,500.00
iii. Transportation		=\$15,000.00
TOTAL		=\$56,500.00

It was agreed that the mayor would make representation to Central Government for \$50,000.00 to supplement the Panorama budget. The remainder would be obtained through contributions from various business places. The mayor was very confident of getting the funds, saying that he would not agree to having the Panorama if the money was not raised. In reply to the proposal of a 50ft wide stage, the mayor was very co-operative during discussions on the Panorama, eager to show his appreciation to the panmen and women who contributed to our culture and Society as a whole, and do not enjoy any substantial returns, especially the smaller bands, who are either not able to take part in the National Panorama or do not stand a chance against the "Big Guns".

On the 22nd January, 1981, another meeting was held with the mayor and the steelbands' representatives. At this meeting the mayor reported that he expected word that very day, on his application for the \$50,000.00 from Central Government and was still very confident of getting the funds. Subsequently, the mayor informed Pan Trinbago that the money was granted for the Panorama. He also said that Mr. Jimmy Morris was the Chairman of the Panorama Committee, and that Pan Trinbago should meet with him (Mr. Morris), to make final arrangements for the Panorama. At that point

in time the mayor cunningly eluded the panmen in a show at the Velodrome. It was learnt later that the mayor had set up a Panorama Committee without consultation with the panmen. One panman was appointed on the committee, but didn't know anything about meetings etc.

A meeting was carded for 5.00 p.m. on Monday 23rd February, to make final arrangements for the Panorama. Mr. Morris was present at the meeting, and fruitless attempts were made to locate the mayor. Surprisingly Mr. Morris (Chairman - Panorama Committee) knew nothing of the proposals agreed to by the mayor and the Steelbands' representatives.

As far as he was concerned the budget which the mayor gave the Panorama Committee catered for eight (8) Conventional bands and one (1) Ole Time Steelband. The prize offered were 1st to 5th place \$5,000.00; \$4,000.00; \$3,000.00; \$2,000.00; and \$1,000.00 respectively; and an appearance fee of \$1,000.00 for the final three bands.

The only ole time steelband was to receive a guest appearance fee. As far as finance was concerned, he had already received a contribution of \$5,000.00 for the first prize, and they were looking for contributions for the other prizes. Totally confused but willing to assist in straightening out a rather disheartening situation, being the Pan lover he is, Mr. Morris again tried to contact the mayor.

It was not until 7.15 p.m. that night that the mayor phoned, He told Mr. Morris that the details which he gave to the Panorama Committee were final, disregarding those discussed with Pan Trinbago. He gave no reason for not attending the meeting and bluntly refused to speak to the panmen. The panmen left immediately for the mayor's home where they met him. He was most disrespectful and deceitful in dealing with the panmen and his last statement was that he could get the steelbands to play in the Panorama for what ever he wants.

On the following day, Tuesday 24th February, 1981, the day before the Panorama was scheduled to take place, the Eastern Region's Executive held a meeting with the bands involved at the Melodians' Pan Tent. The panmen were disgusted with the mayors' unprincipled decisions. They decided that under no circumstances were they prepared to go into the Panorama uncertain of the financial outcome.

The meeting agreed that:-

- Another effort should be made to seek an audience with the mayor in an effort to iron out the issues involved.
- On principle, the mayor should agree in writing to the original budget arrived at jointly by himself and Pan Trinbago.
- That another meeting be held on the following morning, Wednesday 25th February, 1981, the day of the Panorama, at 10.00 a.m., to discuss the outcome of the last minute effort to save the Panorama.

On the very same night, the Eastern Region Executive and other panmen tried to locate the mayor. They were informed that he was at home. On arriving there, they saw his car parked in the garage. His wife informed the delegation that he was not at home. On the morning of Wednesday 25th February, 1981, the mayor was found and informed of the panmen's decision. Only then did he agree to the original proposals.

VAMPIRE YEAR

The fact is that in true Vampire style, the Mayor wanted to ride the backs of panmen. When negotiations were completed, Arima's hardest Mayor (to find), cunningly went about saying that the panmen wanted to boycott the Panorama. It was also learnt that the mayor had a "Pan Adviser", who curiously, is a member of the only Ole Time Steelband, that the mayor had listed for the competition. When will these Judases get

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out of the steelband movement? When will these fast talking, no-gut, politicians (or aspiring politicians) stop seeing the panmen only as political mileage.

Only when the panmen and women stand united for their rights in the society. We see that when the panmen were victorious in their justified struggle for principle with the mayor "Ah-Soul-Man", it was only natural to see "Pontius Pilate" and "Judas" gallerying

themselves in a local newspaper, with half truths and lies, attempting to make genuine committed panmen look like confusionists. But panmen "overs" them.

Steelbandsmen and women must look at their situation seriously and stop allowing their talent and skill to be exploited by the likes of these wolves in sheep clothing. Whether it is a Panorama in Arima, Point Fortin, or anywhere else for that matter, with the strides being made presently in the steelband movement only such an act will lead the movement forward instead of backward.

PANMEN STAY UNITED AND TAKE YOUR
RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY.