THE EXPRESS TAKES YOU TO THE STEELBAND CONSULTATION AT CHAGUARAMAS

They can copy the art but not the spirit–PM

PRIME MINISTER, Dr. Eric Williams, yesterday advised panmen not to worry if foreigners copied their art forms.

He said that outsiders will copy the calypso and carnival but they still could not display the spirit expressed by Trinidadians and Tobagonians in what belonged to them.

Dr. Williams who was winding up the opening day of the National Consultation on the steelband in his capacity as chairman, declared that there were many complaints made about the copying of the country's calypso and pan music.

"Carnival is copied, calypso is copied. They may copy them. But one thing they can't copy is the spirit of the persons beating the steelband in Trinidad and Tobago" he said, bringing loud cheers from the audience.

"Copying was part of the world today", Dr. Williams added. "Some countries lived on copying. The fact that you are being copied ought to be some pride for Trinidad and Tobago rather than apprehension".

He added that in spite of the copying of steelband music, "I think Trinidad and Tobago's supremacy in the steelband will last for many a year...."

Positive programme

Dr. Williams had touched on the conflict between an established steelband and those which newly arrived on the scene.

"We don't want to prevent the emergence of new steelbands; after all, every day you have the emergence of new churches, new trade unions and even new political parties ....," Dr. Williams said bringing laughter among participants, "so why not new steelbands?"

In opening the Consultation yesterday morning, Dr. Williams stressed that what came out of it would be carefully studied before a positive programme was put up to the Cabinet for approval and implementation.

"That necessarily takes a little time. If it's an important conference, it takes more time.

"If we did it in 24 hours, you would say we are not serious people at all. So we encourage you to participate, to try to keep within the scope of the agenda....," he said.

2 BODIES SET UP TO DEAL WITH JOBS, PAN TRAINING

By STEPHEN MOHAMMED
LABOUR REPORTER

TWO committees were appointed at the National Consultation on the Steelband which opened at Chaguaramas yesterday morning – one to examine the question of employment opportunities and the other to arrive at proposals for training of steelbandsmen.

The committee dealing with training which was set up under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education and Culture, Carlton Gomes, had completed its findings shortly before the end of yesterday's session.

It's report will be circulated at the conference today.

Minister of Labour, Errol Mahabir, heads the other committee which also has to submit its report this morning. This committee was still working.

Relevant

The two bodies were appointed following the first phase of discussion on relevant issues by representatives of the steelbands, government ministers and other interested sections of the community.

Both committees comprised members of the tourist board, the business sector, the National Cultural Council and government.

Among the many speakers yesterday, Mr. Roy Augustus, president of Pan Trinbago, declared that were it not for the steelbands the history of Trinidad and Tobago would probably have been written "in the blood of our brothers."

BOTH REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED AT TODAY'S SITTING

"The steelband movement has assisted greatly in the peaceful progress of the underprivileged in Trinidad and Tobago," he said.

Mr. Augustus noted that it must be driven from the minds of the ignorant, "that a steelband is a distracting group of indisciplined individuals.

"A direct effect of our successful grouping and resulting discipline," Mr. Augustus said, "was that the younger members of our community are making prpper, constructive and productive use of their spare time, thereby ensuring that the devil has fewer idle hands for which to find work."

Mr Augustus lamented the fact the the steelbandsman was recognised only for his contribution to an indigenous art form. "His music is appreciated but the man himself is still an outcast," he declared.

Mr. Augustus said that administrative job opportunities and executive positions were not opened up to steelband leaders. And he wondered why was it panmen were utilised mainly as gang leaders on crash programme projects.

He declared that even government showed a lack of confidence in panmen and this was reflected in the marked absence of representatives of steelbandsmen on government - appointed boards, committees and task forces.

"There is not even a panman's voice in Parliament and we see discrimination even in the distribution of national awards..." he added.

Mr. Augustus asked why, in 1973, the music syllabus in schools did not cater for the history of steelband music and the art of "panology".

Several speakers, including the representative from the Beachcombers Steelband from Icacos, urged government to provide them with lands for panyards.

Shortly before the session ended, Dr. Williams announced that a list would be made of the steelbands which needed panyards before follow-up action could be taken in this respect.

But he stressed that contrary to what many people believed, government did not own much land in built-up urban areas.

The Prime Minister also disclosed that his Permanent Secretary has been directed to prepare a draft programme for courses in business management for steelbandsmen.

A sweeping view of the delegates who attended yesterday's consultation.

THREE of Pan Trinbago representatives at the conference. From left: Roy Augustus, President; Damian Holder, Secretary and Peter Aleong, Public Relations Officer.

National body is the answer, says band

A NATIONAL body for steelbands has been suggested as a cure for the ills of the "suffering and frustrations of steelbands and steelbandsmen".

In a paper entitled, "Suggestions for the Formulation and Implementation of a National Body for Steelbandsmen of Trinidad and Tobago", the WASA Silvertones Steelband made this recommendation at the National Consultation at Chaguaramas yesterday.

It was recommended that the National Body for Steelbands should comprise a National Executive Council, to include representatives of Government, Business, the Carnival Development Committee, the National Cultural Council, the Tourist Board and the Faculty of Engineering at UWI.

It should also have representatives of the professions of law, music, engineering and metallurgy, representatives of the Mass Media; tuners, arrangers, inventors and technicians in the steelband craft.

It was suggested there should be four zones, North, South, East and West and Tobago, to be controlled by Zone Executive Committees.

The paper pointed out that such a structure would, among other things, achieve standardisation of practices and performance within the art-form for the National benefit.

RUDOLPH CHARLES, leader of WITCO Gay Desperadoes, tells Attorney General Karl Hudson-Phillips and Labour Minister Errol Mahabir, during a coffee break, about the impounding of 90 of his band's pans by a British freight firm in London.