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— OPEN LETTER TO PAN TRINBAGO —
ML104D

PAN TRINBAGO and associate sponsors — the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and Kirpalani Limited — must be congratulated on the very impressive and successful staging of Pan Festival '86 (Pan Is Beautiful IV) which again displayed pan-musicianship at its very best.

Regrettably, crowd response was generally low and imminent is the great measure of dissatisfaction among steelbandsmen over the administration of Pan Trinbago.

Now that Pan Festival '86 is over and Pan Trinbago and its associate sponsors and the successful steelbands are rejoicing, it is time to ask Pan Trinbago's President Mr. Arnim Smith to clear the air of a number of vital issues which are of serious concern to steelbands in particular and the public in general.

FIRSTLY, there are more than one hundred (100) conventional steelbands registered with Pan Trinbago that are constant participants in the annual Carnival Panorama. Why, for example, less than forty (40) steelbands participated in Pan Festival '86?

SECONDLY, among the 'Pan Around Neck' steelbands, out of more than twenty (20) registered, only three (3) took part in the Festival. Why?

THIRDLY, Is Pan Trinbago fully satisfied that the Test Piece selected for Pan Festival '86 was in accord with the wishes and concurrence of the majority of the registered steelbands?

And FOURTHLY, Did all the participating steelbands in Pan Festival '86 submit their music score sheet in accordance with regulations governing the Tune of Choice?

These are only some of the many questions being discussed by steelbandsmen and concerned members of the pan-loving public. Without proper straightforward answers Pan Trinbago is being accused of partisanship and indifference to some steelbands, and general mal-administration.

Perhaps it may be pertinent to draw attention to what happened during Pan Festival 111 held in 1984. As the sponsor and Public Relations Officer of a steelband I have first-hand information of certain matters.

In the Pan Around Neck Category in 1984 Pan Festival, TCL Skiffle Bunch won from the 1980 and 1982 Pan Festival Champions — Hoytonians despite a protest letter to Pan Trinbago indicating that TCL Skiffle Bunch did not submit the music score sheet for their Tune of Choice 'Dance of the Douens' in accordance with the stipulated regulations and therefore ought to be disqualified. The protest letter was treated with utter contempt by Pan Trinbago. Not even an acknowledgement.

It is now more obvious than before that there was no music score sheet for the tune 'Dance of the Douens' in 1984 as the popular local arranger Len "Boogie" Sharpe said recently in the media that Phase 11 Pan Groove was having 'financial difficulty' in paying for the music score sheet of the said tune which it wished to play in Pan Festival '86.

Certainly, had the said music score sheet 'Dance of the Douens' been available to TCL Skiffle Bunch in 1984 Phase 11 Pan Groove would have had little or no difficulty in obtaining the tune in 1986.

One is left to the inescapable conclusion that something was amiss in 1984 and Pan Trinbago's silence on the subject is most pronounced.

Another most amazing factor in the 1984 Pan Festival was the fact that TCL Skiffle Bunch scored 223 points to the Hoytonians 310 in the preliminaries. But in the finals TCL Skiffle Bunch performed a 'miracle' amassing a stupendous total of 490 points (yes, 490 points, a mere matter of 267 points more than what they secured in the preliminaries) to defeat the Hoytonians final round score of 481. Naturally, there was an uproar among pansmen and panlovers. There was utter disbelief that a steelband, playing the same piece (without submitting a music score sheet) in the same competition within a few days would more than double its preliminary points.

Of course, the Hoytonians sought, and rightly so, an explanation, but to no avail. Pan Trinbago, as usual, remained silent.

The obvious conclusion, Pan Trinbago's favouritism of one steelband and the victimisation of another. Where is the fairplay by the national steelband representative organisation Pan Trinbago?

Of significance that very year (1980) during the Panorama finals, Pan Trinbago was contemptuous of its own rules when the said TCL Skiffle Bunch was permitted to play at the end of the competition and not in accordance with the number originally drawn. Of course there were protests from the other steelbands including Hoytonians. Believe it, Pan Trinbago remained silent. Strange when President Arnim Smith seems to be so vocal!

The call goes out to Pan Trinbago to clear the air on the issues raised in this memo so that the dissatisfaction expressed by steelbands regarding the overall administration of Pan Trinbago and the accusations of favouritism etc. may be clarified or appeased.

No wonder the serious talk of the formation of a new truly democratic organisation to represent steelbandsmen in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago now fills the air. Only Pan Trinbago could avoid this through proper communication and explanations among its members.

JOHN K. HOYTE