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Pan Trinbago

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Steelband and the tourist industry

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LAST WEEK I was dealing briefly with certain aspects of marketing the steelband. This week I would like to go further in depth. The first question that arises is; whose responsibility is it to perform the task of marketing the steelband? The Tourist Board, Pan Trinbago, individual steelbands or entrepreneurs? The fact is that all these bodies working together would still not be equal to the task with out an established national policy on pan and even further, on the arts and entertainment, taking into consideration the important role that culture plays in our multi-racial society.

Our People

We have begun to look seriously at Tourism as a source of revenue but Trinidad and Tobago has developed into one of the more sophisticated Third World countries and our people will not be willing to condescend to foreigners as prescribed by the demands of the hospitality industry.

Sun, sand and sea is out as a priority and in any case this aspect of tourism is better catered for by our Caribbean neighbours. The solution lies in exporting our most lucrative attraction, the steelband.

The world market, if properly developed, can accomodate all the existing steelbands that we have in operation. Imagine ten thousand of our nationals being gain-

fully employed in attracting foreign exchange to the country.

Most Panmen

This projection may seem far fetched and unrealistic to the layman, but most panmen who have performed abroad know it to be a very attainable goal. Just ask Jit

Samaroo, whose family band receives more requests for foreign engagements than they can handle. Most of the bands are not organised properly enough to benefit from such offers. The Tourist Board is the agency which handles most of the requests for steelbands but it is just another bureaucratic branch of

exploit it in a major tourism thrust.

Short Periods

Foreign audiences are mostly impressed with the Symphony Orchestra aspect of the steelband as this has universal appeal.

The logistics of moving a large 50-man steelband around and keeping them

abroad for any length of time militates against protracted tours by full-strength bands. Such tours should be made for short periods and to receive most long-term benefits, the orchestra should appear in prestige concert halls such as the Royal Albert in London or New York's Carnegie Hall where Desperadoes won two standing ovations last year, eclipsing the more famous acts on the show, Liza Minelli and the New York Symphony Orchestra.

Once we can get top rate exposure for our leading bands this can be followed up by smaller groups made up of panmen who have no commitments or restrictions at home to prevent them from making full tours of between two months and six months duration. In other words we are looking at the professional panman.

There is the lucrative American University and College circuit where not only musical entertainment but also lecture-demonstration workshops can be arranged. The marketing of steelband instruments is another lucrative field but the constraints of space will not allow me to go into this aspect presently.



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