

OUR OPINION

Panorama should pay

THE MARRIAGE of convenience between the government-sponsored Carnival Development Committee and the organisation representing the steelbands has been, like all such marriages, an uneasy one.

The government has the money and the panmen the muscle and the music. Out of this union Panorama has more or less flourished over the years until this year's fiasco.

Our submission is that only the panmen and whatever organisation represents them can make Panorama and any other institution connected to the steelband movement work.

The difficulty is staging Panorama costs money, and these days a lot of money. The panmen themselves have no money; most bands rely on sponsors for everything from instruments to outfits.

But it should be possible for Panorama to make money. Indeed it is asking a great deal for taxpayer support of Panorama when other elements — band leaders, calypsonians and so on — that make up carnival are just waiting to see which way the Minister of Culture will jump before making their play in the money stakes.

The reality is different, however. The Ministry of Finance naturally will not permit Carnival to overburden its resources, even in the light of its impact on the national psyche.

GETTING HELP

First of all Panorama should be profit-oriented. The preliminaries, the semi-finals, the finals should earn enough money to pay the cost of staging them and make a profit.

This means organisation; realistic budgeting. The public must pay a true market price for going to hear the shows; crowd control must be strict.

No one expects the panmen to do these things by themselves. But they ought to be able to manage if they could persuade the fairly large army of sponsors to help with advice and management.

For if Panorama is to be regarded as a business enterprise depending on the one hand on the skills of the panmen and on the other on making it pay its way, sponsors should do no less than offer their management expertise and assistance.

We feel sure the public will respond enthusiastically to a business-like Panorama, one that is free of the heat of controversy and one that demonstrates the responsibility of the panmen.

The government, too, would not dare to deny some form of assistance to a well-run Panorama that will not be involved in an exchange of discourtesies and the presentation of what sounds like ultimatums.

But a formula must be found. We have seen and felt this Carnival season the effects of the panmen's boycott, and the panmen have suffered as much as anybody else.

Pan Trinbago must now set about finding the base for a vibrant future which will give the panmen an opportunity to stand on their feet and not wait for handouts.