Gordon: We must go forward with a policy of pan as centre-piece of tourism thrust

PAN FESTIVAL WILL BE MARKETED TO THE WORLD

THE FACT that my Ministry has been involved in the launching of Pan Is Beautiful 5 is a commentary on the new and aggressive approach to marketing an outward looking Trinidad and Tobago.

These festivals had been seen previously only in terms of their cultural contribution so that when I received the invitation to address you this morning, I made it a point to clarify with the Minister of Culture and with Pan Trinbago's President, the role which was expected of me.

Naturally I was delighted when I was informed that, unlike, previous festivals, this one will be a World Festival.

If I may quote the relevant extract of the letter from Pan Trinbago's President.

Numerous Requests

"This year because of numerous requests received from foreign-based steelbands, it was decided to expand our present festival programme to encompass these orchestras.

Having this international flavour, we are positive that the world will be interested in the grand event."

And how right you are Mr Smith. Not only in your conviction that we can attract worldwide attention but in your positive and enlightened approach to taking the steelband forward from the national to the international level.

We have for far too long kept the steelband virtually cloistered in our backyard, a unique Trinidadian form of excellence for our personal enjoyment, which we would share with anyone who came to visit us at Carnival time, but which after Ash Wednesday was relegated to the occasional performance, and being generally taken for granted until the next year.

And so it has been with the Calypso and the creativity of Carnival and even the private property stamp we have placed on Tobago for our personal enjoyment, when its natural beauty and attractions should have been long before developed to contribute to the revenues of the nation and the transformation of the economy.

Special Pride

So you will understand, Mr Chairman, why I take special pride in being associated with this new and outward-looking signal from the steelband movement.

We must leave the world in no doubt about where the home of the only new musical instrument of the 20th century is located.

And [illegible] invite world to share it with us.

This signal of positive support and active participation in the tourism thrust from the steelband movement is but another measure of the mobilisation which is now slowly but irresistibly taking place around us.

It is taking place in our garment industry and in particular with our small garment manufacturers, it is taking place in our self-help groups, it is beginning in our cooperative movement and now the international flavour of the event we are gathered to launch today tells me that it is also beginning with the steelband movement.

Some of us will recall that this event had its beginnings in 1951 with the successful performances of the Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO) with the first international participation by Trinidad and Tobago in the Festival of Britain.

It was following that success that the Trinidad Music Association included steelband soloists and steel orchestras in their Music Festival Competition.

Those were the highlights of the sixties and although a dry spell for festivals was recorded in the seventies, the steelband movement with its vigour and experimentation under Pan Trinbago reemerged with "Pan Is Beautiful" in 1980.

Creative Journey

So that the creative journey to Pan is Beautiful Five must be regarded as a legacy and it falls to each one of us to ensure that it succeeds as it continues its journey.

As much as we compliment Pan Trinbago and its associates, the Royal Bank, in its administering of this project, this festival transcends institutional or corporate boundaries.

It readily became a national event and now we must make it into the international event it deserves to be.

To that end, I would like to suggest to the organisers that we explore with the major television stations on the several continents and North America, arrangements for transmitting at least the finals of this event via satellite wherever this is possible.

Can you imagine what it would do for the steelband movement if major television stations in North and South America, the United Kingdom and Europe the Far East could be [illegible] to televise the [illegible] from the stadium.

I have been assured by the General Manager of TEXTEL that this is entirely possible from a technical point of view and that the major hurdle will be the commercial arrangements.

Every Assistance

Further, he has pledged to give every possible assistance. Likewise, I have consulted with my colleague, the Minister of External Affairs, Senator Basdeo, and he too has given his support by promising to enlist the assistance of our foreign-based Ambassadors and High Commissioners in making appropriate representations to the relevant people in the countries to which they have been accredited.

Undoubtedly, there will be much fine tuning to do for such a project to be successfully undertaken.

But I am convinced that the principal hurdle is really to ensure that the people who have to make these decisions have a clear appreciation of the extraordinary heights to which pan has risen and the unparalleled range and the attractiveness of the music which is produced at our festival.

But whether or not we succeed on this occasion, that is the way to go.

We must now aggressively plan on marketing pan to the world and as we do so review the once loudly proclaimed plans to make it a thriving industry.

The objective should be not only to captivate music lovers but to produce pan for export to the capitals of the world.

Being Developed

I have personally heard a Master of Ceremonies introduce Jamaica as the home of the steelband on the north coast of that island during a steelband performance to an international body of newspaper publishers.

I understand that steelbands are now being developed in Sweden, the United States and of course in our neighbouring islands of the Caribbean.

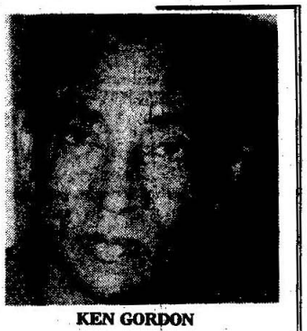
This is all healthy and in fact quite complimentary to the movement but let us not misunderstand what will follow.

Where market demand exists, investment in development to exploit that opportunity will inevitably follow.

"WHY can't we transmit via satellite the finals of our Steelband Festival around the world? Textel has said that it is entirely possible."

So said Senator Ken Gordon, Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism, as he addressed the formal launching of "Pan is Beautiful 5 - World Steelband Festival" at the Royal Bank's Independence Square office on Wednesday April 30.

The full text of Minister Gordon's speech is published here.



KEN GORDON

The reality is if we do not, others will and we would have no one to blame but ourselves.

I have therefore held discussions with the Chairman of the IDC and he has promised to undertake the necessary studies to determine how we might best develop the industrial and export potential of the steelband.

In the same way that Pan Trinbago has broadened the horizons of this festival, I hope that there will be similar enlightened support readily forthcoming from all sectors of the community and in particular, the private sector.

Simple Gesture

A simple gesture which will manifest that support would be the application of a "Pan is Beautiful 5, a World Festival" stamp on all items of stationery or correspondence going out of the country.

Simple though it would be, it is an effective way to tell the world that pan belongs to all of us and we stand four-square behind the festival.

Similarly, the Chairman of the Tourist Board has put together a special two-week promotional package which will be marketed to music lovers throughout the world who will be encouraged to come to share this experience with us.

As an extension of this, I would suggest that special invitations be extended to tour promoters in North America and in Europe who should be brought down, if necessary as our guests, to experience at first hand the extraordinary attraction of pan in full flight.

Increasingly, we must plan to coordinate overseas performances with tours of three and four weeks at a time.

The benefits are obvious for we will not only extend the promotional overseas thrust but we will more effectively spread the cost of moving the band over an increased number of events and make it possible for the individual pan member to increase his earnings from each tour.

Into Effect

In a small way we have already begun to put this into effect and have taken a number of initiatives to try to line up promoters wherever overseas tour are discussed.

You may be interested to know that we are currently trying to finalise arrangements for six steelband overseas visits during the course of 1988 to different parts of the world.

Wherever possible, these will be used for marketing purposes and will be extended to promote other performances at suitable venues wherever satisfactory arrangements could be put in place.

From this beginning, we must go forward with a clear-cut policy which must have pan as the centre-piece of our overseas tourism thrust.

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The lege[illegible] line of th[illegible] movement which has been one of its greater strengths will be needed now more than ever, for the opportunities we are attempting to create will carry with them additional responsibility.

A Respect

The steelband [illegible] woman must there[illegible] creasingly be seen as an artist.

This is a respect that has been earned by hours and in some cases, years of disciplined commitment to an art form that has moved from the backyard to Carnegie Hall and Albert Hall.

If we are to keep it there we must ensure that the performers who have made this possible, frequently at the cost of personal sacrifice rather than reward, are treated with the respect that they deserve.

May I therefore salute them all as they embark upon their hours of unrelenting commitment: To practise and practise and practise as they prepare for "Pan is Beautiful Five, A World Steelband Festival."

For the benefit of those who may wonder whether the strong emphasis we now propose to place on promoting the steelband will be at the cost of promoting the other and varied aspects of our culture, let me readily assure you that this is not so.

But when one is entering a highly competitive race with the handicap of a late start, it is necessary to place the emphasis on your major strength to achieve maximum impact.

That is the edge that pan will give to our tourisms thrust and it is one we must fully exploit even as we plan the wider promotion of the many other festivals which make us the unusual people we are.

Extensive Package

Carnival, Pagwah, Calypso, Divali, Tassa drumming all have their place on the national calendar and are part of the extensive promotional package through which we hope to bring increasing numbers of visitors to our country.

But whatever their attractiveness, it is the uniqueness of the steelband that tells the full story of the creativity which makes us different.

For all these reasons we view support for "Pan is Beautiful Five, a World Steelband Festival" as a national obligation.

We call on the people of Trinidad and Tobago to give their unqualified support to making it the success it richly deserves to be and by so doing, contribute not only to its success but to the development process which requires that we maximise the use of our resources whatever and wherever they are.

The Skills

We have done so by protecting our garment industry to give the skills of our people an opportunity to flourish, we have done so by accelerating the search for oil on the East Coast where the major potential exists, we have done so in Tobago where vast potential for tourism exists, we propose doing so in Caroni where vast sums already invested will be wasted if this site were not utilised for the Racing Complex and we are likewise working to do so at Point Lisas where the facilities already exist for the speedy establishment of a free zone.

Mr Chairman, the success of this festival is an objective to which the Government to which I have the honour to belong, is fully committed.

You have pointed the way forward with an imagination and purpose that is in keeping with our new horizons.

May I likewise thank your associate, the Royal Bank, for their enlightened sponsorship and pledge the full support of my Ministry to "Pan is Beautiful Five, a World Steelband Festival.