

TOP STEELBANDS PROTEST EXCLUSION

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PANMEN were last night quarrelling among themselves about their "suspicions" over the criteria used by the judges for selecting and eliminating bands in the two-day Panorama competition.

The row blew up almost immediately after it was known that certain big name bands were not among the 16 selected to compete in the semi-finals next week Thursday.

Steelband supporters and panyards buzzed with excitement after such bands as WITCO Gay Desperadoes, Catelli Trinidad All Stars, East Side Sylvania and CIBC Starlift were left out in the cold among the 63

with them at 6 p.m. yesterday to explain the criteria used by judging and selection.

It was the first time in years that the bands had failed to make it into the semi-finals.

Mr. Cedric Campbell, public relations officer of the eastern region of Pan Trinbago, said that panmen became suspicious because no score-sheets were available, either at the Carnival Development Committee (CDC) or Pan Trinbago offices on Queen Street, Port of Spain.

Criteria

Addressing a large crowd of grumbling panmen outside the CDC and Pan Trinbago offices last night, Mr. Campbell disclosed that one of the three-man panel of judges, Father John Sewell, had agreed to meet

Father Sewell did not turn up, neither did the two other judges, Mr. Clive Alexander and Mr. Steve Christian. However Mr. Bertie Fraser, president of the pan body, came out of the CDC's office to say that Father Sewell had agreed to meet them today.

Another surprise, to its supporters, was that apart from the big name bands being left out, hot favourite Solo Harmonites barely made it, judging by the points system used. It scored 220 points along with TTEC Mowtown and was the fifteenth band to be selected in order of points.

A check revealed that some nine bands are protesting, through Pan Trin-

Despers, Catelli, Starlift out of Panorama semis

bago, their exclusion from the final 16 to face the semi-finals.

Mr. Fraser, who confirmed the protest, said they all wanted to know the criteria used by the judges in arriving at their selections.

Sylvania East Side militant, John McKarm, president of the eastern region, called for the reintroduction of the "Band of the People's Choice", which he felt would eliminate wide disparities.

He also suggested that the public should be allowed to vote by ballots, apart from the judges, on their choice of bands as mooted by Mr. George Goddard, former president of the old Steelbandsmen Association.

One critic said that perhaps the CDC had taken a cue from Mr. Hugh Borde, leader of the US-based Trinidad Tripoli, who told the EXPRESS recently that "regardless of how poor some bands performed, they tended to make it to the finals merely because they are sponsored by big firms."

Mr. Borde, now out of the country, had called for a scrapping of the system used by the CDC and replaced by one aimed at eliminating suspicion.

Another pan enthusiast said: "Panmen cannot blame the CDC this time, they themselves agreed and selected the judges."