

Evening News

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TASPO Can Go Right On Top

LONDON, Sept. 10—

As A Musical Force — Will Trinidad Give It The Chance ?

Asks

Charles H. Archibald

in A WEST INDIAN WINDOW IN LONDON

What is the future to be of the Trinidad Steel-Band now in London? I ask that question, because all the signs are that the Steel-Band can stay on in the United Kingdom indefinitely as a topline entertainment unit appearing in all the best places and pleasing all the best people.

I heard today from an unimpeachable source that the Savoy Hotel want the Trinidadians early next year for another midnight cabaret engagement, and that the management of the Palladium, one of London's very famous variety theatres, would like to present them on its celebrated stage.

But the Steel-Band cannot do anything about these first-class offers just at the moment. They are already committed until the end of their stay as it has been arranged when they left Trinidad.

Trinidad, therefore, has an important decision to make. Is the Steel-Band to be permitted to continue its triumphant tour of this country, turning itself into an independent professional band, and fulfilling in quick succession the many engagements that will be offered to it, or is it to return to the Caribbean as originally planned there to disperse itself and be lost to the entertainment world overseas which can provide it with its best opportunities and enable it to develop its authentic West Indian music-making under the very best auspices?

There would be no hesitation about my answer. The Steel-Band should be released from any moral obligation to return and its members should be told that the decision whether to stay on in the United Kingdom is left entirely to them to make in the light of the offer now being put forward and consulting their own sentiments only.

Success

The band has been a great success wherever it has appeared. All the evidence suggests that, with proper professional guidance, it can go right to the top almost immediately as a musical force.

This is a great triumph for native Trinidad talent and for all those who defended steel bands in their early days and organised the public support of the present venture.

It would be a terrible pity if the Trinidad public, having already done so much, should falter at the prospect of even greater triumphs. If the band were allowed to continue in the United Kingdom, I believe that it might well prove the unifying force that West Indian forms of artistic expression have long been needing here.

I go so far as to predict that within 18 months, led by the band,

we should be seeing West Indian performers in London coming together to present an all-West Indian revue that would sweep the town.

It so happens that we have in London, at the moment, that other West Indian artistic force, authentic and talented, Beryl McBurnie. If the two forces could be linked —and again I repeat, under proper professional management— they would be irresistible. If the chance is lost, we may have many years to wait before another like it comes our way once more. Time is very short. The decision, important as it is, must be arrived at with all speed.

Trinidad can clear its conscience in the matter by leaving the decision to the Steel-Band. I urge that this should be done without protracted argument and that whatever official and unofficial adjustments have to be undertaken should be undertaken without delay.

Some of the Steel-Band members may not, for personal reasons, want to stay on; some may feel that they have had enough of a strange country for their first visit and may wish to see their homes again. If so, let them come to their own choice.

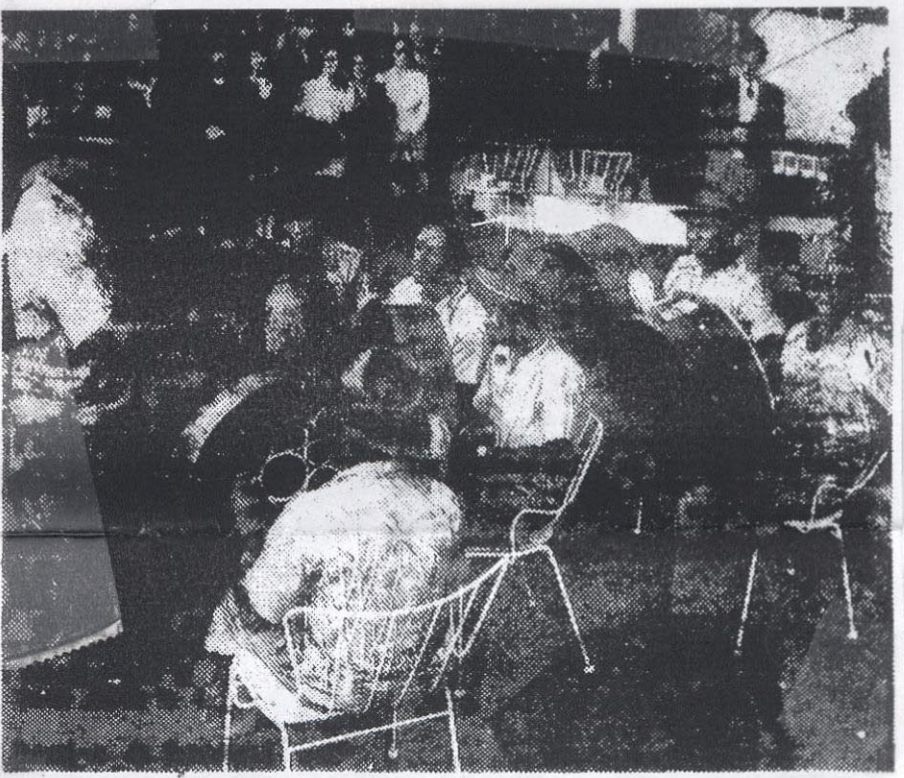
Young men of their outstanding talent should be given their independence at the first available moment. And the key to their door may prove a key admitting much more than their individual freedom to the Caribbean.

Cost of Living

The rising cost of living is rightly causing great apprehension in the Caribbean. The fact that increasing prices for the necessities of life are causing the same apprehension everywhere else is small consolation.

The difference between the Caribbean and the large metropolitan centres is that the Caribbean has little or no room for manoeuvre. Our failure to gain any real concessions for our trade with Canada has left us caught in the same old corner, at the mercy of all the economic storms that blow across the Western world.

The Trinidad Government's policy of concentrating attention on the growing of more food crops is an admirable one, but that policy should be enforced at all times; it should become one of the foundation stones of the new



TRINIDAD All Steel Percussion Orchestra, gives it first public performance at the South Bank Exhibition under the leadership of their Manager, Lieut. N. Joseph Griffith.—(CIO).

Caribbean society that is painfully struggling towards an independent existence. It should never be allowed to degenerate into a desperate measure to meet a desperate situation.

The opportunity our trade mission to the United Kingdom and to Canada missed was badly missed. As far as I can gather, it is not Canadian opinion that nothing significant could be done to improve Canadian-West Indian trade at the time our mission was paying its ineffective visits.

Let me quote some words of the Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce, spoken in the middle of the year. He said: "The currency difficulties are improving. Every time we bring trade with any country into balance we make it possible for them to relax the restrictions."

In most countries with which Canada is accustomed to trade, restrictions are being relaxed to some extent. They are not being relaxed as quickly as we think they should be, but we are constantly pressing for the relaxation of restrictive measures. . . . As far as the balance of trade between Canada and any sterling area country is concerned, there is no good reason why the barriers can-

not be taken down, and we think that they should be taken down much faster than that is being done."

The West Indies might take note also that an increase of the dollar income from tourists in the Bahamas has led to an increase in the dollar allocation to that territory. Even if nothing could have been allowed to us immediately, our trade ambassadors might have sought arrangements for a future increase of dollars when the general situation eased. It is their absolutely empty-handed return that is so irritating and so full of foreboding for our immediate future. We still seem as far away as ever from any real solution of our major economic problems.

As one who knows all about economic stringency, having lived through the last six years of post-war shortages and abnormally high taxation in the U.K., my fellow-Trinidadians have my sincere sympathy in their current difficulties.

But I and all with me on this side of the Atlantic had one consolation and still have it—we have fought our difficulties as self-reliant community. Victory is sweeter that way, and defeat is strangely easier to bear.

How It Started

—By Jean Newton

That Word "Derogatory"

Evening News Sept. 19, 1951 pgs 3