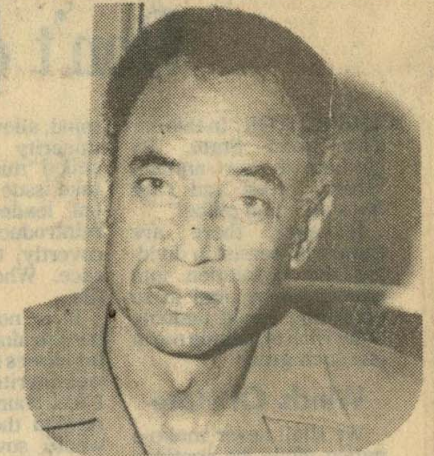


'We must make the festival into an international event'

Gordon: Transmit pan finals around world



SENATOR GORDON

"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 last week.

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

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 at-

tractions 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 we must systematically plan to make the vast talent which has brought this about work for us as we sharpen the quality of our performance and invite the 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.

Creative Journey

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

ADDRESS by the Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism, at the launching of "Pan is Beautiful 5 — World Steelband Festival," at the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited, Independence Square, Port-of-Spain, on Wednesday, April 30, 1988.

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.

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.

Every Assistance

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 and the Far East could be persuaded to televise the final half-hour of the championships live 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.

Further, he has pledged to give every possible assistance. Likewise, I have consulted with my colleague, the Minis-

ter 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.

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

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