

NOW PM THINKS OF A PAN SCHOOL

By EARL MANMOHAN

PRIME MINISTER Dr. Eric Williams wants to set up a school for panmen.

He sees such a need because of the "brain drain" of pan tuners and commented during an exclusive interview with the EXPRESS at

a Tobago panyard on Tuesday night:

"I think it is time we started training people to tune and play pans. It will be hard but we have got to press on. If we want to continue to identify the steelband with Trinidad and Tobago we must overcome some very important problems."

Dr. Williams also chided businessmen who fail to support the steelband. "There are not enough businessmen supporting steelband," he said, "we need more." His comments are particularly signifi-

cant because during his current tour of panyards he has talked about teaching pan to school students. He has also identified steelbands as a "Small Business Year" project.

Dr. Williams' remarks were made in the panyard of the Mount Irvine Development Buccooneers at Calderhall. This band will not be able to play mas' this Carnival he heard, because their pans have no wheels.

Bandleader Benedict Yorke told the Prime Minister that this was one of several problems facing his 40-member Buccooneers.

Proposals

"I understand from Mr. Goddard (Steelband Association President) that it will take about \$60 to put wheels on each pan-set and this cannot be done before Carnival," Dr. Williams said.

And here is where he made his appeal to businessmen to support the steelband movement. Dr. Williams said he hoped the Cabinet Committee (under IDC's Max Cuffie) which is looking into support for the steelband movement in "Small Business Year 1970" will identify some of the problems.

"I have my ideas which will be put with the committee's proposals," he added, promising to make the report public shortly after it was considered.

Among those accompanying Dr. Williams on his visit to the panyard were Mr. A.N.R. Robinson, External Affairs Minister; Mr. Errol Mahabir, Labour and Social Security Minister; Mr. George Chambers, Public Utilities and Housing Minister; Mr. Basil Pitt, Tobago Affairs Minister of State, and Mr. Goddard.

Competition

Dr. Williams said he would like to see steelbands take part in keen competitions among themselves and requested Mr. Goddard to draw up a programme for such competitions on a regional basis.

"These boys play well, but where do they go from the panyard? Nowhere! This is why I hope the committee would come up with something. I would like to see more competition. The boys don't get enough," the Prime Minister said.

"All community centres should have a panyard attached to it," he added.

Asked whether his current visit to various panyards were part of a "meet the steelbands tour", Dr. Williams explained:

"I went to hand out trophies at the South Port-of-Spain Youth Centre and I was encouraged to listen to the Tokyo Steelband nextdoor.



Dr. Williams hears from Buccooneers leader Benedict Yorke that his band cannot play mas' this year because their pans do not have wheels.

Problems

“After that the boys at City Symphony invited me over, then the Blue Diamonds and Catelli All Stars. I visited them all so as to avoid any jealousy.”

Last night he visited the Old Oak Casablanca panyard at East Dry River, 12 hours after his return from Tobago.

Dr. Williams said he will request his Cultural Adviser, Mr. Aubrey Adams to arrange a free open air steelband performance for Tobago.

“And there must be more of these even after Carnival,” he said. “The problems of the steelband are not only at Carnival time. They will be there long after Carnival has passed.”