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Senator insists panmen must learn to read music

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Steelband

By DAVID RENWICK

ALLIANCE Opposition Senator Neville Hilton-Clarke ruffled several feathers on the Government side in the Senate yesterday when he chided local steelbands for "cogging" foreign classical music, rather than seeking to compose their own.

Tourists found the steelband "quaint" but pan players must now "go forward," he insisted, and learn how to read music. Boogsie Sharpe, one of the few who attempted to arrange music specifically for the steelband, was "unusual." Music should be put on the school curriculum, "from St Mary's to La Brea" and then pan would move into a new phase — "phase two."

Hilton-Clarke's remarks were made in the context of the Queen's Hall (Amendment) Bill, a brief piece of four-section legislation which increases the membership of the board from seven to nine, in order to accommodate representatives from the fields of

music, dance and drama. But that did not stop senators from spending most of the afternoon debating it, with Hilton-Clarke very much to the fore.

However, his remarks on steelbandmen's musical preferences drew an indignant riposte from at least one Government member, his fellow Tobagonian Senator Patrick Arnold, while others grumbled disapprovingly in the background. Arnold saw no reason whatever why panmen should not be universalistic in their choices and play Tchaikovsky and Beethoven as well as local calypso music.

Hilton-Clarke insisted any discussion on Queen's Hall, a major arts venue, must include an examination of the broader cultural scene. He perceived no anomaly in including in this the 1986 edition of the magazine *Trinidad Carnival*, which he severely upbraided for omitting "a single mention of Tobago." The only reference to Tobago was in connection with the name "Trinidad and Tobago." He described the magazine as "technicolour trivia" and its producer, Roy Boyke, as a "journalistic renegade."