

By JOHN BABB

New efforts begin today to solve 'pan' problems

PROBLEMS confronting the steelband will be aired on yet another occasion when the three-day Government-sponsored National Consultation on the Steelband, opens today at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre.

These problems are not unknown, for they have been aired over and over at different levels during the past decade.

Dating back to December 9, 1962, a delegation comprising Mr. George Yeates, Mr. George Kangalee, Mr. George Beckles, Mr. George Goddard (a delegation of the Georges) and Mr. Kenrick Thomas met with Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams at White Hall. They discussed the problems and submitted certain proposals.

Dr. Williams asked the delegation to "put it in writing." This was done shortly after.

As a result, Dr. Williams appointed a Steelband Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Ralph Romain, who then was attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture.

After investigating the steelband movement, Dr. Romain submitted recommendations late in 1963 to the Prime Minister.

The following year — 1964 — the Carnival Development Committee (CDC) set up a Sub-Committee on the Steelband.

This was done in the wake of a request from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the CDC to think in terms of developing a Steelband and Calypso Theatre to operate

outside of the Carnival season.

The sub-committee was headed by Mr. Andrew Carr, and included Mr. Sam Ghany, the late George Bailey and Mr. George Goddard.

Recommendations of the sub-committee were ratified by the CDC in 1963, and submitted to Government, via the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In 1966, the Prime Minister appointed another committee — this time, under the chairmanship of Mr. M. P. Alladin, Director of Culture, to probe the problems of the steelband.

The committee submitted recommendations in 1967.

From October, 1968, one-

time President of the now defunct National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandmen (NATTS), Mr. George Goddard was employed by Government as an Adviser on the improvement of steelband music.

Mr. Goddard submitted recommendations in 1969.

Over the years, between 1962 and 1971, the Steelbands' Association — the panmen's body — submitted a number of proposals to Government on what should be done to assist the steelbands.

In January, 1970, the Prime Minister set up another committee — this time, headed by Mr. Max Cuffie, and gave the committee six weeks in

which to submit recommendations.

The recommendations were submitted to the Prime Minister late February, 1970.

In March and April, 1970, the Prime Minister held five meetings — separately — at his residence in St. Ann's with representatives of more than 100 steelbands throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

At these meetings, further discussions were held on the Max Cuffie Report, as well as a document in relation to sponsorship, which was prepared by an official in the Ministry of Planning and Development.

A number of decisions were taken at these meetings, in-

cluding one to set up a Co-operative with the sponsored steelbands, with the sponsors buying shares on behalf of the panmen, but having no say in the operation of the co-operative.

There was also a decision to establish a pan-manufacturing factory, and to set up a Steelband Research Council, under the chairmanship of the panmen's body president, and to include pan-tuners, representatives of the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), a qualified musician, and a representative from the Faculty of Engineering at the University of the West Indies.

During 1970, the Prime Minister also made several visits to panyards, and donated

drum ("traps") sets to some bands.

Despite the many ups and downs, the steelband movement managed for four years to physically exhibit a semblance of oneness with a National Steelband and which came into being in 1963, and functioned effectively until Montreal's Expo in 1967.

It started with the formation of one representative from 44 different steelbands. But later the formation was halved to one representative from 22 different steelbands throughout the country.

It comprised 22 members on overseas performances, and for local performances, the membership would swell to 38

— each member from a different steelband.

The National Steelband performed in Europe; for the Festival of Britain in 1965; also in the United States as guests of Moral Re-Armament (MRA) in 1964, performing in 13 States on that tour. It also performed at Expo in Montreal in 1967.

The band also performed locally at functions for representatives of foreign governments visiting Trinidad from time to time. These VIPs included the Queen and President Leopold Senghor of Senegal.

The panmen's body was, and still is hard-pressed for funds.

When it functioned as an association it received two loans from Government — one of \$4,200 to send the National Steelband to the United States in 1964. This

Continued on Page 9