

Pan: a movement that beats within our hearts

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more charitable sensitive inflexibility. But the loss to campus enriches the Tunapuna Community. Nestor Sullivan adumbrated the continuing sad saga of the panman's search for a home. Arnim Smith — Pan Trinbago's president, warned that the organisation was not going to be anybody's patsy. The contrary view was beginning to gain prominence. But it was Pat Bishop who brought the house down with a daring and a thought provoking address. The eloquence of which showed up not only the inadequacy of this pen. Indeed, all the Lady Minister could do, speaking after, was to claim her as the chairperson of a commission on the Creative Arts. Well, at least a good selection. I trust though that Pat's frank and open views did not hasten the closing of the Solid Waste Management's Co. Public employees are so afraid to spend these days for fear of reprisal. Ms Bishop went behind the self-help concept. She too shared Belgrave's disappointment in a broken dream. But how can the panman or woman concentrate on the notion of musical excellence when there is an over dependence on self-help? What time will be available for music if after work the few hours of leisure are taken up with extra curricular activities like laying blocks and mixing concrete. This situation can of course be aggravated by another question. Given increased prices and rising unemployment in the nation in general but among panman and women in particular, Quo vadis? The pan players may now have all the time in the world, how can the concept of self-help sit on hungry bellies and weakened muscles? As a brother told me downtown: "Man the hottest thing I have had on my stomach all day is the sun." Ms Bishop explored the demeaning of the pan players seeking financial assistance from the business community. A donation to a steelband is no favour. Trinidad and Tobago is advertised as the home of the steelband therefore, a percentage of the dollar earned from tourism should go to the movement as a matter of right.

Yes, the steelband movement travelled a long distance in the last 30 years. There is still undoubtedly a long way to go. Governments will come and go but the culture must never be denied. In moving forward let us guard against the down escalator. There are still those among us who unfortunately refuse to accept the steelband as an indigenous national art form. It sickened them in the last Parliament questioning every cent spent on Panorama and on the steelband movement now these same people control the national purse strings. I have witnessed people attempting to put ethnic rather than national values on the musical invention of the century, the better to further their own ethnic interests. But the steelband movement has already travelled the road of darkness into the sun. Let those who seek to fetter it for their own interests be warned. It's spontaneity and growth can not and will not be halted. The more panmen and women go the more will come. Pan is a movement that beats within our hearts. A people's movement. A national movement. To eliminate it the population must be destroyed. If you stop the drums the bamboo will cry out and our pansticks will always be at the ready. The body can be re-enslaved by low wages and economic necessity. The mind can be temporarily numbed by deceptive though convincing rhetoric and catchy slogans. But the struggle of the steelband is the struggle of our people. The pan will rise above its adversities, the more difficult the times. The spirit will remain undaunted and free. Congratulations to those inventors and pan players — those who are here, who have gone, and those yet to come. No list of national heroes can be complete without them.