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Photo by Kenny Rudd

PAN TRINBAGO HEAD SPEAKS: Mr. Roy Augustus, President of Pan Trinbago, addresses the National Consultation on the Steelband at the Convention Centre, Chaguaramas, yesterday. Other Pan Trinbago representatives with him are, (from left) Mr. Vere Greer, Vice President, Mr. Damian Holder, secretary, and Mr. Peter Aleong, Public Relations Officer.

Trinbago charges National Awards discrimination

STEELBANDSMEN, through their association — Pan Trinbago — yesterday accused Government of discriminating against them, even in the distribution of National Awards.

In a speech in which Government came in for some knucklerapping, Pan Trinbago's President, Mr. Roy Augustus, noted that the nation's highest honour — the Trinity Cross — was yet to be awarded to a panman.

On the other hand it was awarded to "a foreigner who definitely seems less deserving." He obviously meant Garfield Sobers.

Mr. Augustus' speech was the opening statement from the floor of the Government-summoned National Consultation on the Steelband, which opened yesterday at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre.

Representatives from 93 steelbands, sponsors, the University of the West Indies, the Tourist Board, the Steelband Improvement Committee and the mass media, were present.

Mr. Augustus noted that at long last society had begun to recognise the panman, but only to the degree of "a drop in the ocean."

The steelbandsman he said,

was recognised only for his contribution of an indigenous art form.

"To be quite frank, only his music is appreciated but the man himself is still very much an outcast," he added.

He said the majority of pan musicians were still on the lower rung of the social ladder. And the saddest part of it was, there seemed no hope in the foreseeable future for the panman to begin the long climb.

NOT ASHAMED

Why must society refuse to allow the panman to achieve the status befitting first-class citizens? Mr. Augustus asked.

"We who have done so much for our country, is it asking too much of society to forget the 1940's? — We are not ashamed of that period for it was society itself which forced us into it — but after all, we are in the seventies," he added.

Why can't administrative job opportunities be opened to steelband leaders? he asked.

Mr. Augustus said he found that the ability of steelband leaders to organise could be utilised elsewhere, other than as gang leaders on crash pro-

gramme projects.

Even the Government, he noted, showed a lack of confidence in steelbandsmen. And this was reflected in the non-appointment of any steelband representative on the number of Government-appointed boards, committees and task forces.

He also noted that "there is not even a panman's voice in Parliament."

Mr. Augustus, a representative of Port Contractors City Symphony steelband, asked what had the Ministry of Education and Culture done to

positively encourage the development of the steelband.

The Pan Trinbago's President posed three questions:

Why in 1973 the music syllabus in schools does not cater for the history of steelband music and the art of panology?

Why in 1972 the Ministry of Education and Culture allowed a Music Festival for school children "and not a drum was heard?"

Was the steelband really recognised in its own land?

Mr. Augustus received a loud applause from steelband representatives.

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AT THE request of Pan Trinbago, the National Consultation on the Steelband, will open its discussions this morning on the music of the Steelband.

Discussions will deal with composition, tuning, arranging, conducting, standardisation of pan tuning, and the production of steelband instruments.

This item was originally down for discussion yesterday, but Pan Trinbago's President, Mr. Roy Augustus explained that it created a hardship on pan-tuners to be away from their panyards for three days at this time—a time of Carnival preparation.

Discussion on 'music' today

The Consultation agreed that this item—the music of the steelband—will be discussed this morning.

Today, two committees — one to consider employment opportunities for panmen, and the other on music training for panmen—will report to the Consultation.

In the post-lunch session, there will be discussions on "The Steelband and its Sponsors" and "Government and the Steelband."

Chairman is Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams. All members of Cabinet are attending.