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OUR OPINION

Expanding the city limits

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PORT OF SPAIN MAYOR, Ethelbert Paul, has delivered some heartening news, with his announcement that the acreage immediately west of the National Stadium will be given to Pan Trinbago.

This move ends a nomadic chapter in the evolution of the national musical instrument.

Mayor Paul's revelation came during a church service to mark the end of City Week and in immediate response to a plea by Canon Knolly Clarke, that the government should try to ensure that the steelband movement is not hindered by desperation.

Immediately prior to the good news, the pan body had been subjected to the worst form of humiliation, after the news broke that the organisation was facing eviction from their very headquarters this weekend.

In the nick of time, Mayor Paul announced that the land would be made available to Pan Trinbago and Culture Minister Joan Yuille-Williams announced that her Ministry would meet the differential between the new demand and the present rent.

Works Minister Colm Imbert also promised to identify funds to construct the new Headquarters of Pan Trinbago on the acquired land.

In a way not previously envisaged, this was a demonstration of church and state coming together for the good of the society in which they both operate. In socio-psychological terms, the spinoff benefits of such a move are invaluable.

That the area is also earmarked for what is being referred to as a new

Port of Spain, also imports a feeling of final acceptance of the instrument whose short history has been marred by undue bigotry.

The Mighty Sparrow, in a calypso of the day, properly captures the feeling of the fifties that pan players were outcasts.

Although politicians (like Albert Gomes) were supportive of the developing instrument, even at that time, there was no groundswell of appreciation for pan.

Today, we are seeing a shift, as tangible results replace years of lip service, leading us to believe that several other promises made to the steelband movement will materialise in the short term.

Government should note that the showing by Pan Trinbago's Investment Company (Panvesco) after just a few months, is nothing short of strong, with a clear profit of \$68,000 in the company's inaugural year.

Such a performance should encourage the executive to disburse the residual \$4 million (promised to the steelband movement since 1990) in light of the careful management of the first tranche, which funded Panvesco.

Making pan the centre of the new city brings a new focus to the development and commercial application of the instrument.

With business all around, it would be difficult for pan in the 21st century to hang on to the dependency syndrome as a method of operation.

This whole movement would not only expand the city limits as we know them, but the whole vision of the people who inhabit the area.

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