

OUR OPINION

IS it the inertia of the local businessmen or the local Government which has caused Trinidad and Tobago to suffer the ultimate humiliation of having the one genuine indigenous article we have produced - the steelband - organised into an industry in another country?

This paper has suggested that local entrepreneurs were at fault in allowing a private engineering firm in Croydon, England to steal a march on us in this way.

But San Fernando solicitor, Mr. Krishna Narinesingh, who is on the board of several business firms, has pointed out that civil service slothfulness was also a factor in the situation.

Promotional aids

He has explained that, as far back as 1968, a group of people connected in various ways with the steelband movement, decided to develop a steelpan instrument industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Prime Minister was "enthusiastic"

Why was ^{ML 1040} 'pan' idea dropped?

and directed the "appropriate" government agency to take action. No action of any significance was, apparently, ever taken.

It was envisaged that the Government would provide matching finance for the industry, in the form of a factory building or buildings that it would use British West Indian Airways and embassies and abroad as promotional aids to export.

None of this happened, as Mr. Narinesingh has related.

Clearly, if the Government had gone

ahead and played its part with a greater sense of urgency and involvement, we would have been in the business of manufacturing pans, for home use and export, years ago.

But we are still left to wonder why private enterprise, which first initiated the idea, did not pick up the ball and run with it when it became apparent that the Government was dickering.

Acted in concert

Government support for any business idea is certainly useful, since the state controls so many fiscal and economic resources which can be utilised for the benefit and convenience of investors.

But the absence of government support need not render an idea sterile.

The British company which has been formed to make, and sell, pans in England appears to have acted in concert with other private firms, not with a government agency.

It is to be wondered why our local entrepreneurs did not press on with their original plan when the Government began dilly-dallying?