

TUNERS MUST WORK TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD THE STEELBAND FOR T'DAD

PANMEN must do away with individualism and work together to safeguard the future of the steelband as a creation from Trinidad and Tobago.

This urgent message has been sent out by Laventille pantuner Bertie Marshall who is currently employed at the University of the West Indies in a government sponsored project which it is hoped will lead to the eventual production of steel-pans by automation.

Marshall, whose name is synonymous with "experiment" said that another innovator, Tony Williams at St. James is also involved in the Cariri project.

The two were prominently featured in an educational film three year ago, which was carried on approximately two hundred television stations in the United States.

Unique style

Commenting on a new report from Britain which stated that steel-pans may soon be mass-produced, there, Marshall said: We have to blame ourselves

"The best pantuners in the world are still based in Trinidad and Tobago.

"What has kept a standardised pan from being formulated is the reluctance of tuners to give up their own unique style for one which will utilise only certain features from each."

He said "Steelbandmen in Trinidad and Tobago know that there is need for a standardised pan.

"Kimloy Wong, who might be considered a pioneer at utilising the steelband for educational programmes called for it long ago, and many other pan enthusiasts and musicians have done so since.

"We have had meeting after meeting on the subject, but no one seems to want to sacrifice any of

their methods so that we can get one basic set of instruments. But if we don't do it, we will get licks from outside."

Marshall warned: "When this happens, all we can hope is to follow them and work to produce a set of pans which will be

simpler to play and with a more perfect pitch.

Marshall explained that the current method of tuning pans took approximately six hours to sink and groove the pans, even when the tuner was experienced.

"The expert can tune two instruments a day.

"If the experiments which are being done at Cariri are successful, it might be possible for us to have to sinking and grooving done by mechanisation, and the delicate part- the

tuning done in the traditional methods.

"This will also lead to a standardised pan, but it looks as if we cannot afford to waste time, or the others will get off before we do."