

ML 1040

Sponsorship's valuable but can kill initiative

THE EDITOR: Permit me to clear up any misconceptions formed in the minds of the public by a headline in your October 9 edition.

The article in question deals with coverage of a debate held at the Carnegie Library in San Fernando on October 7. The theme was *Sponsorship of the Arts: Moral Responsibility or Favour*. The discussion was very frank, as is normal for debates of this nature, but your reporter has quoted me out of context in an apparent effort to relay a mood of controversy.

I dealt with the many negative aspects of sponsorship but I never made the unequivocal statement that "sponsorship was killing the steelband movement," as was categorically stated in the headline. This headline is causing me great embarrassment as it could be offensive to the many patrons of the steelband movement who give genuine assistance without seeking any rewards for their favours. I am especially perturbed, as in my capacity of Chairman of the Schools Steelband Music Festival I am appealing to sponsors to come forward and support the venture.

I would like to put all the statements attributed to me by your reporter, in the course of the debate, into their proper perspective.

My opening statement dealt with the role of the artiste in a healthy, happy and productive society where leisure and entertainment have an obvious function as does the development of the creative mind and the promotion of aesthetic values. I noted that we live in a capitalist society and that capitalism

LETTERS

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by its very nature is based on greed and exploitation. I further stated that it is only natural for this parasitic system to redeploy some of its resources into the society, upon which it feeds, through the medium of the consumer.

The statement that steelbands have lost their identity, because of sponsorship, came as a response to moderator Bob Henry who identified two cases where sponsorship had been given to artistic ventures without making it public or attempting to obtain mileage. I pointed out to him that those very firms would never offer the same facilities to a steelband without claiming their pound of flesh. I further drew to the attention of the house that most steelbands are now called by their sponsors' names.

I also dealt with a question from a member of the audience who was in the process of forming a steelband. He asked what I thought were the advantages or disadvantages of sponsorship. I mentioned the obvious advantage, the provision of financial resources which would not be otherwise available to the band. I also told him that some years ago, while I

was in the same position of starting a new band, I was faced with the exact problem and that the members took a firm decision not to seek sponsorship because the revolutionary ideas they were projecting would be opposed by any sponsor and we would have to change direction. I made the point that sponsorship often is responsible for *killing the initiative* of steelbands in that they get accustomed to having their needs catered for and lose their self-reliant drive, thus making it very difficult to survive should they lose their sponsorship.

In my summary I stated that it was the moral responsibility of both the Government and commercial sector to support the arts and that while Pan Trinbago prides itself on being the leading cultural organisation in the country, we do not see it as belittling ourselves when we seek assistance.

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ficer, Pan Trinbago**