

I WAS ON July 25, 1990, that the Prime Minister announced in Parliament Government's intention to make \$7.5 million available to the Steelband Movement to be expended on a steelband concert hall, pan cottages and promotional material.

I wish to take this opportunity to once again publicly congratulate the Government's initiative, since it must be viewed as a singular opportunity to realise some of the cherished dreams of the Movement.

Following the announcement, Pan Trinidad held talks with the Prime Minister and submitted a memorandum to the Government which articulated some of these dreams and in so doing expanded on the original concept, different in detail perhaps, but consistent in spirit with that announced by Government.

You will be pleased to know Pan Trinidad has drawn up a comprehensive series of action plans which will place this country's gift to the world of music — the Steeldrum — in a position of improved independence.

The plan will set in motion a range of activities which will ultimately make fundamental changes to the situation, not only of panmen/women, but of the quality of life of all musicians as well as the wider community.

In identifying these projects, we have been guided by two principles. Firstly, we are quite firm in our conviction that under no circumstances must these funds be used for non-capital expenditure.

At this point, I wish to emphasise to the benefactors of the Movement that Pan Trinidad will still be seeking their assistance in assisting with our recurrent programmes.

For, bitter experience has taught us that little of lasting benefit has been gained by expenditure of previous "steelband or culture" funds on recurrent items.

Fundamental Changes

We believe that this \$7.5 million represents a golden opportunity to re-order our priorities and put first things first.

The second principle employed in selecting the proposed projects is that the widest possible cross-section of the Steelband Movement should benefit.

In addition to making a significant contribution by setting the Movement on a truly self-reliant path financially, we will be provided with a unique opportunity to draw a wider cross-section of not only the steelband fraternity, but indeed the national community into the management of steelband affairs.

I wish to share these proposals with you as briefly as possible,

One of the cornerstones of the new thinking is the establishment of an investment fund, which will create a viable and profitable entity capable of effectively employing the resources entrusted to it.

The successful operation of this fund will demonstrate to the society at large that the Steelband Movement can effectively manage and develop an investment capability which can serve as an inspiration to the so-called "disadvantaged" groups in the society.

We never seem to tire in our proclamation of the progress made by the steelband over the last 50 years. However, while not gainsaying the fact that there has been some advancement, by and large the rhetoric is sadly at odds with what for the nation ought to be depressingly embarrassing reality.

The dilapidated physical premises of the majority of steelbands bear eloquent testimony to the continued social marginalisation of the steelband and remains vivid reminders of the road yet to be travelled.

Pan Trinidad is mindful of the problem which will begin the process of enhancing the physical conditions under which most steelbands in Trinidad and Tobago operate, even as the vexing problem of Security of Tenure of lands occupied by steelbands is tackled.

Employment Relief

At the same time short-term employment relief under the auspices of the Labour Intensive Development Programme is envisaged.

Among the plans is one for the establishment of a chrome-plating facility, and Pan Trinbago is confident that the plant can be brought on stream soon. Moreover, the steelband demand for the services of this plant, which will tend to be seasonal in nature, can readily be supplemented by competing head-on in the existing market.

More importantly, we believe we can deliver a better quality product at more competitive prices.

This confidence to deliver on this promise is bolstered by continuing support from individual professionals at the University of the West Indies and CARIRI. Additionally, projects for drum manufacture and mechanical sinking and grooving have also been worked out.

These and other manufacturing aspects of our capital projects will be effected through our industrial company Pandevco, chaired by Carlos Hee Houn.

Of critical importance to the entire initiative, is the creation of a steelband foundation. One of the foundation's primary responsibilities will be research, but having as well the wider function of enlarging its initial endowment from both local and foreign sources.

The Foundation as an institution, can be instrumental in fulfilling a variety of needs of the Movement.

In such circumstances, it follows that Pan Trinbago also proposes to make it possible for a National School of Music to be established upon the St Augustine Campus at the University of the West Indies to give direction and substance to the embryonic efforts in respect of the Creative Arts which have already been established there.

Such an educational initiative will in time address the needs of pan players who are in panyard service, even as it addresses the needs of musical education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels as well as those special concerns of the highly gifted.

In this area, we envisage a role for the Foundation in raising funds for the School of Music and on its own account simultaneously. We propose that the Foundation consider an international series of benefit concerts for the School of Music.

The success of these projects will actually depend on the involvement of a wide range of professional skills which are readily



Pan Trinbago Supplement

Re-ordering our priorities...

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OWEN SERRETTE, President of Pan Trinbago, addressed the launching of Pan Trinbago Capital Investment Programme at the Central Bank Auditorium May 29. This is his speech

available to us but which have been hitherto under-utilised.

Thus we propose that the various projects be managed by separate Boards comprising mainly of professionals.

In this regard, Pan Trinbago has sought and received the kind approval of the following persons:-

REGINALD DUMAS, diplomat, former Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister and Head of the Public Service, to be Chairman of the Foundation.

CARLOS HEE HOUNG, General Manager, Methanol Company of Trinidad and Tobago, to head the Industrialisation Board.

CLARRY BENN, Investment Manager, Unit Trust Corporation of

Trinidad and Tobago, to be in charge of the Investment Fund.

PAT BISHOP, Chairman for the School of Music.

At the same time Pan Trinbago proposes to review the existing thinking about the National Concert Hall with the intention of developing relevant, useful and affordable solutions to the problems created by the needs of our musicians for appropriate performing space.

Pan Trinbago has already taken the initiative to prepare its members for the onerous task ahead. You will be pleased to know that Pan Trinbago's Executive has been exposed to a live-in training session in Management and Management Techniques, including all aspects of prudent Financial Management and Budgeting.

Of major significance to this occasion is the ratification of a Constitution which would underline and emphasise the sovereignty of the Steelband Movement.

It would put into constitutional perspective the vision of Pan Trinbago and cater for the changes and improvements that would obviously be part of an organisation that is as progressive as ours.



OWEN SERRETTE