

OUR OPINION

Mr Smith selling panmen short

PAN TRINBAGO is wrong and must speedily reverse its decision to withdraw its support from the First World Carnival. The steelband movement and the nation should not be made to bear the shame. In fact, the reasons advanced by the executive of the representative steelband organisation have shamed us enough already.

The facts are not in dispute: six steelbands were to play in six cities around the world while a seventh was to play in Port of Spain. The television screen was to be divided in seven and the seven steelbands were to be seen by 750 million people playing in unison.

Unfortunately, sponsorship fell through and the Sport Aid charity decided that two would play in London and Singapore while the rest would play at home in the National Stadium. Pan Trinbago baulked with president Arnim Smith insisting that all six must go or none at all to avoid disagreement among steelbandmen.

Mr Smith, we believe, is selling his members short. The six bands initially selected to go, were selected on the basis of the last Panorama placings. If now only two can go, then we cannot see how steelbandmen would fail to understand that the first and second bands in the

last Panorama must be the ones to go.

In any case who goes and who does not go is not the issue. The issue is not even the exposure Trinidad and Tobago will receive. The issue is the 15 million children, largely in the Third World, who die every year from diseases which could be easily prevented, many of whom will be saved because of this effort, a complex, gigantic humane enterprise mounted on the understanding that people have to care about people.

Trinidad and Tobago has an opportunity to be part of an enterprise which will redound to the everlasting credit of the civilisation. To cavil about trips and two-day sojourns in foreign countries is to wallow in pettiness and we hope that steelbandmen will tell their executive that they realise that Sport Aid is not about self-gratification through trips but about helping to give a fighting chance to the children of this world.

Pan Trinbago, for valid historical reasons, is very sensitive to any slight to its membership that it perceives and time and time again, we have defended the organisation and championed a number of cases but this is one occasion when it is allowing its sensitivity to get the better of its good judgement.