

Come hell or high water the bomb stays

THE "Bomb" competition which is now the subject of so much controversy, is not an artificial feature of Carnival imposed on steelbands by "outside interests."

That point is so important that it must be made primarily and unequivocally.

The "Bomb" competition, in fact, is a natural outcome of the friendly rivalry which developed among steelbands playing non-calypso tunes on the streets of Port-of-Spain on Carnival days since the late 40s.

The contest itself came into being at the request of steelbandsmen made through their association, and if the democracy of

Carnival is to remain unblemished it is the consensus of steelbandsmen that the bomb competition remain on Frederick Street where it started.

Foreign tune

"Those of us who were around Carnival in the late forties will very rightly remember the Woodbrook Invaders, now called the Shell Invaders, playing during this period a number of Latin American tunes such as the mambo," recalled Mr. George Goddard, president of the National Association of Steelbandsmen.

"You will also remember that a foreign tune entitled 'The Happy Wanderer' was played on the streets by almost every steelband, if not by all.

"And in a recent article, Mr. Pete Simon rightly pointed out that in the early fifties the Trinidad All Stars, now called Catelli All Stars, played on the streets for Carnival a number of non-calypso pieces such as 'Tammy,' a popular song at the time, and 'Minuet in G,' 'Intermezzo,' etc.

By 1958 this practice of dropping non-calypso "bombs" had become a new

and welcome feature of the Carnival celebrations, one which generated wide interest among steelbands and their supporters, even long after Carnival. Mr. Goddard observed.

The spirit

The association's president saw this bomb-dropping development as very healthy in the light of the steelbands progress, not simply because of the spirit of rivalry which prevailed but because it inspired steelbandsmen to explore musical frontiers.

The first discordant note in the Bomb affair came in 1958 from a Trinidad journalist named John Grimes, now resident in the United States.

"Mr. Grimes called me a few weeks before Carnival 1958 and said that as president of the Steelbandsmen Association I did not realise that steelbands were completely ignoring their own tunes—namely the calypso," Mr. Goddard continued.

"He further informed me that steelbands were playing tunes which would not serve in the best interest of the calypsonian or Carnival, and he felt I should have done something to stop them from doing so.

"I told Mr. Grimes that the Steelband Association had no authority to tell steelbands what to play or not to play on Carnival days. I don't believe any organisations has or should have this authority.

His story

"I emphasised my belief that steelbands should be free to play whatever they wanted on Carnival day."

Mr. Goddard said he introduced the feelings of Mr. Grimes into his story of the bomb competition before Mr. Pete Simon.

Indeed, he admitted that the arguments put forward by Mr. Grimes had "some merit." And so in order to give some balance to the situation, Mr. Goddard prevailed upon the Association's executive to limit their programme — then called Carnival Bacchanal only to calypsoes.

The best

In 1964, by which time almost every steelband was playing a non-calypso tune on the road for Carnival, a request was made by steelbandsmen to the association to organise a competition to decide on who were dropping the best bombs.

Subsequently the association sought assistance from the Chamber of Commerce in finding a sponsor to pro-

Scoreboard

THE Steelband

"Bomb" competition started in 1965. Here are the list of winners since then:

1965—Forsyth Highlanders.

1966—West Indian Tobacco Gay Desperadoes.

1967—Forsyth Highlanders.

1968—Carib Tokyo.

note a bomb competition. The First National City Bank generously came forward.

Mr. Goddard continued: "The bank was prepared to donate a challenge trophy and cash prizes of \$1,000 first and \$500 second. These prizes offered by Citybank did not meet with the approval of certain people who felt that for the Panorama contest which was a calypso contest.

"Because of this it was decided that the first prize would be \$500 and the second \$250."

It remains

A recent suggestion to move the venue of the Bomb competition to the Queen's Park Savannah has met with the almost unanimous disapproval of steelbandsmen.

"Come hell or high water, the Bomb remains on Frederick Street," Mr. Goddard said.

Last week the Bomb competition changed sponsors. Replacing Citybank is Mr. Arthur Bentley, one of the most faithful friends the steelband ever had.



MR. G. CHANDLER, Managing Director of Shell Trinidad Ltd., toasts members of the Shell Invaders Steel Orchestra at the band's 25th anniversary celebrations last year. Left to right are Mr. Vernon Mammette, Mr. Lionel Garcia, Mr. Chandler, Mr. Gerry Frederick.

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The hard working Gay Crescendoes

EIGHT YEARS ago, Melville Bryan started a steelband in Montrose, Chaguanas. He called it the Gay Crescendoes and since then has worked hard to create a really worthwhile band. That he has succeeded there is little doubt for he was able to win the confidence of Seeram Bros., of Chaguanas who gave their sponsorship to the band in 1966.

Gay Crescendoes has taken part in many festivals and competitions, notably Panorama and the Steelband Festival organised by the Steelband Association and while the big prizes have so far eluded them they are well on the way to making themselves a force to be reckoned with in the steelband world. At the Chaguanas Panorama in 1967 they won second prize.

When the band started there were only eight members who made their music on six pans. By the time Seeram Bros. sponsored them the band had increased to 20 members and had 15 pans. In 1966 their sponsors supplied the rhythm section of the band, which today has a membership of 15 and 20 pans.

The vice-captain is Mr. Clunis Hosang with treasurer, Lennis Singh, secretary Azak Mohammed and manager, Carl Creig.