

Pan in patent danger

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Pan inventor Jomo Wahtuse wants the Government to revoke the nation's highest award, the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (ORTT) given to G-Pan patent holder Professor Brian Copeland.

"The Government should do a forensic audit on the monies spent on the development of the G-Pan, and more so investigate what was the justification in awarding the nation's highest honour to Professor Copeland," Wahtuse said.

"If a reasonable explanation cannot be found, his award should be revoked because that is an embarrassment to the entire pan movement, who to date haven't had the guts to show their condemnation of it."

On July 8, Attorney General

Anand Ramlogan announced that the Government was taking legal action against Copeland, chairman of the Steelpan Initiative Committee (SIC) and Steelpan Initiative project (SIP), and three associates for registering the Percussive Harmonic Instrument (PHI) pan as their own, and for profiting from sales of the G-pan.

Ramlogan said that the Government was entitled to share in the profits, since it had spent \$34.5 million in research and development on Copeland and his associates' inventions.

Wahtuse, 76, is a retired aircraft engineer and prolific inventor who developed several pan instruments such as the Guinness World Record-breaking for the first and largest elliptical instrument, the jomoline, the manetone, a pan with a detachable face, Venturi electronic pan, xylopan and a collapsi-

ble pan stand. He said the G-Pan scandal began when former prime minister Patrick Manning took it on his own to award Copeland with the highest award of the country.

"That was an insult to the whole pan fraternity," he said.

"Copeland is not even a pan tuner," Wahtuse revealed.

"To me that was a slap in face to all the panmen and tuners who spent so many countless hours and sacrifice in a most selfless way in making this instrument what it is today."

Wahtuse cited several pioneers, whom he felt were more deserving of recognition for their innovations and inventions in the development of pan. These included Ellie Mannette, Anthony Williams, Bertie Marshall and Denzil "Dimes" Fernandez. He bemoaned that none of their names were etched on a patent.



Inventor Jomo Wahtuse stands proudly next to his creation, the jomoline with his Guinness World Records certificate in recognition of him being the first man to create the largest and only elliptical instrument in the world.

PHOTO COURTESY JOMO WAHTUSE

Pan inventors

Ellie Mannette was the first to sink a pan, groove, increase its notes from 13 to 19, add raised notes, and the first man to put rubber on pan sticks.

Tony Williams invented the revolutionary spider pan with its fourths and fifths notes, and the jumbo pan.

He was the first band leader to have pans transported on wheels, while being played on the road, instead of having them slung from around the neck with straps.

Bertie Marshall created the "double seconds" pan, the amplified pan and the "Bertiphone" pan.

Denzil "Dimes" Fernandez invented the Bore Pan, characterised by the boring of small puncture holes in the pan.

"It is Tony Williams' fourths and fifths pattern of notes layout on the pan which was used by Copeland on the G Pan," Wahtuse revealed.

"I was there when Tony Williams was making G-pan decades ago. He was the first man who made the first large instrument in the 70s.

"When one person comes with his

degree, gets the highest award, plus monies and literally plagiarises all these people's Intellectual Property and also walks away with a patent, it is so disheartening.

"It is something bordering on sheer dishonesty when such people as Jimi Phillip and other tuners, who were actually involved in the creation of the G-Pan, their names have not even been mentioned, let alone were signatories to the patent document.

"The tuners and others over the years have brought the instrument to the stage of excellence it is today through toil and sacrifice."

Wahtuse asked if anyone could recall an occasion when the professors and high intellectuals at the university ever assisted or passed on information to the tuners that could have assisted them in any way?

With no Government funding, but by dogged determination and sheer personal sacrifice Wahtuse is currently working on his latest invention, an amplified electronic instrument using money from his modest pension.