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All Stars loses Catelli sponsor

By VALENTINO SINGH

CATELLI LTD, a food manufacturing company and a household name in the steelband world, has withdrawn its sponsorship from the Trinidad All Stars Steel Orchestra after an association of 20 years.

In a letter to the band last Friday, the company said it preferred not to be embroiled in a string of controversies which surrounded the band during the Carnival celebrations and which has followed it since then.

Six leading members of the band — musical director Jerry Jemmott, arranger Leon "Smooth" Edwards, secretary Barbara Critchlow-Shaw, John "Poison" Douglas, Anthony Guy and Bunny Wells — also handed in letters of resignation.

Contacted yesterday, Osmond Hale, Chairman of Hand Arnold, the holding company for Catelli, said he regretted the decision but things were not working out the way they should.

"We understand that discipline within the band is at a very low ebb and prefer not to be associated with such," he said.

The fact that so many of the core members of the band resigned, Webb said, showed that something was wrong.

No Longer Disciplined

"We have had meetings with these members as well as those who are still associated with the band but we have not been able to resolve the problems and the company prefers not to be associated with what is happening," he added.

Also contacted yesterday, Jerry Jemmott, whose association with All Stars spanned the years of its sponsorship, said the atmosphere in the band had changed and it was no longer disciplined.

He said problems started prior to the Panorama finals. He did not want to point to any specific incidents or to wash dirty linen in public, but said "there is a general weakness in the leadership and many of the younger players are being influenced in the wrong direction."

"When we look around, we see a lot of other influences and individuals who have nothing to contribute but seem intent on breaking the band."

Jemmott, who took All Stars to a record-breaking four victories in the Steelband Music Festival, said after 20 years he sadly found he was no longer happy in the band.

Upcoming Festival

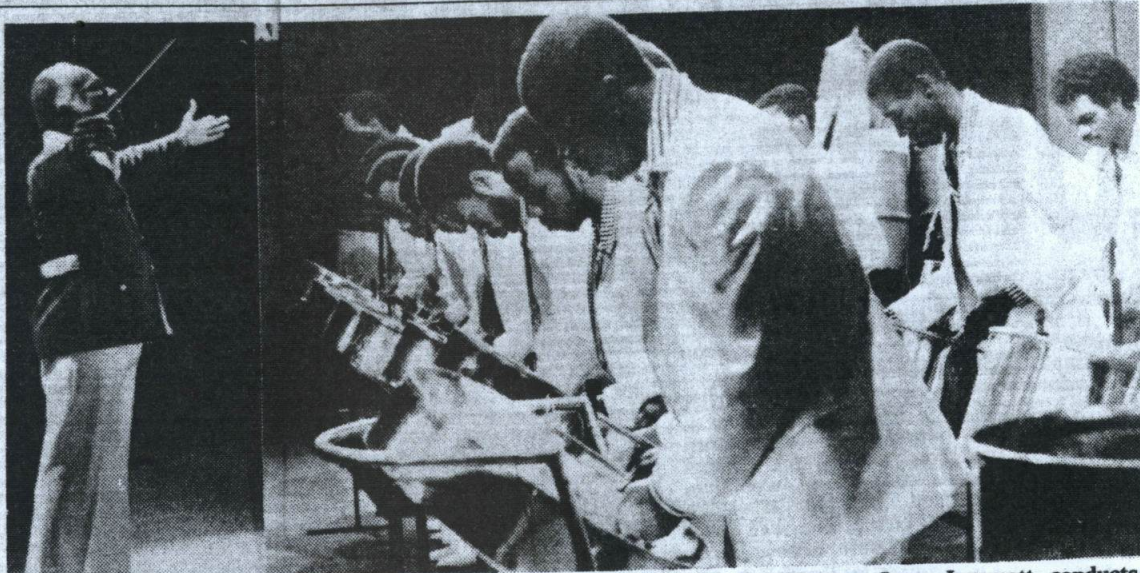
However, the services of the six will not be lost to the steelband world as they are planning to get together as a group and give something to the country.

Jemmott explained they would be linking with Solo Harmonites for the upcoming festival in October, which is being sponsored by Royal Bank.

Asked what he thought would happen to All Stars now that it has lost the sponsorship and six key members, Jemmott said the band will continue to be a force, adding:

"I think what we left there is quite capable of taking care of itself as far as music is concerned, but the band will need to tighten up on its leadership if it is to achieve anything."

All Stars, based at Duke Street, Port-of-Spain, is in its 53rd year. It has won the National Panorama competition on three occasions — 1973, 1980 and 1986. This year, although making it to the final, the band finished a disappointing seventh, playing Duke's "Pan In Yuh Rokungkertungkung."



FLASHBACK: Former Musical Director of the Trinidad All Stars Steel Orchestra, Jerry Jemmott, conducts band at Queen's Hall during its 50th anniversary concert.