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Govt accused of 'pan politics'

STAFF REPORTER

THE PRESIDENT of the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandsmen, Mr. George Goddard, yesterday charged that there was a "lot of political immorality" going on with politicians and the steelband movement for this year's Carnival.

Mr. Goddard made this allegation during a Press Conference which he said the association was forced to call in order to clarify reports last week that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had assisted more than 50 steelbands either by gifts or help in the construction of sheds or providing other amenities.

He claimed that since publication of the report issued from Whitehall, steelbandsmen from the bands mentioned had told the Association that they had received no such assistance.

(During the talk with newsmen, the captain of one of the

bands came into the Association's headquarters on Queen Street Port of Spain, and said that all they got from Government was old talk).

Stressing that he was not speaking as President of the Association but as one "interested in the development of the steelband," Mr. Goddard who is attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture as adviser on steelbands, also accused other people of playing politics with the panmen.

"The Prime Minister and his party, the Chairman of the Carnival Development Committee and the Cultural Adviser, (it might cost me my job), are playing a lot of politics in Carnival.

"They don't have any serious interest in the steelband movement, if they had at all they would think in terms of serious economic and social development for steelbandsmen," Mr. Goddard said.

Getting back to the report from Whitehall, Mr. Goddard said that no fewer than five

steelbands had registered complaints of having received no assistance.

He said he knew of a steelband in the St. Ann's area that got a set of drums amounting to \$360.

"But this in no way could help the steelband to come out day," he said, explaining that on Carnival Monday and Tuesday it took approximately \$10,000 for one steelband to appear on the road for Carnival.

No reply

Mr. Goddard charged that the Prime Minister was bypassing the Association during his visits to panyards although last year the Prime Minister had made it clear that he would deal with steelbands only at the level of the Association.

He contended that if the Prime Minister was really interested in the steelband movement why was it that he (Goddard) got no reply from Government to recommendations

he made in his capacity as Adviser on Improvement of Steelband Music in 1969 and last year.

Among the recommendations Mr. Goddard claimed he submitted were the employing of five pan tuners by Government at \$600 per month, construction or rehearsal sheds, forming co-operatives among steelbands, appointment of steelband attaches to all foreign embassies and annual summer tours to the United States.

"All of these things I recommended and up to this date I haven't even got an acknowledgement", Mr. Goddard complained.

He added that the attitude of the Prime Minister by visiting Calypso tents without consulting the Calypsonians Association and visits to panyards amounted to a divide and rule policy.

An official Government spokesman said last night he could not comment on Mr. Goddard's charges "until I see what is published."