

The baffling technique of pan tuning



Conference
Chairman
Dr. Eric
Williams

SO you think the steelpan is a humble instrument crudely designed by the peasant class for their own entertainment?

Wrong. The technicalities involved will amaze, and even baffle you, as they did the Prime Minister and others at this week's Steelband Consultation.

One Mr. Vernon Als, of Hooper Street, San Fernando, got up and informed the gathering at Chaguaramas:

"Tuning is a scientific art governed by pitch forks of various frequencies. For instance, Continental or English Organ pitch, the note A being 435 V.P.S. or C.P.S.; the C, 517.3 V.P.S. quoted by the English as Vibrations per Second and by the Americans as Cyclist Per Second."

Pitchfork

Obviously, the audience responded vibrantly with raised eyebrows, short gasps and sounds of "Oooh Gooh" that blended musically.

But Mr. Als continued to impart his knowledge:

After precuring the pitchfork to the note A49 at 4,10 V.P.S., for example, take the note C52 in the piano, frequency 523.3 V.P.S. or C.P.S., divide the ratio of a semi-tone which is 1.05946, you get the frequency for the note B51, this frequency you divide by the said ratio would get



By ANDY PITMAN

frequency for B flat and lastly with the same procedure you get to A 49. Thirdly, figures will then

show the frequency being 440 V.P.S. or C.P.S."

And he assured the bewildered listeners, "just a little mathematical arrangement and you are right there." Mr. Als also had advice for pan tuners: "The concert pitch for them should be A440; C 523.3 V.P.S. or C.P.S., as this pitch is known as British Standard or American Federation of Musicians which the BBC use in London and is considered universal."

No one doubted the accuracy of the renowned

musician's statements. Not after hearing his qualifications: "I am a member of the Institute of Musical Instrument Technology (M. I. M. I. T.) and also a qualified pianoforte technician, I attended Music Trades School known as the Northern Polytechnic on Halloway Road, London, for a number of years, placing first in the examination results of July 1955. I am also a dance pianist."

To the disappointment of many, and the relief of others, Mr. Als said unexpectedly;

"I can go on and on with this subject the whole day, but it will be advisable for the pan tuners to get on with the job and at such time, if and when I am called upon for assistance or full-time service in this field, I shall be delighted to handle this."

For those interested, Mr. Als is associated with the WASA Silvertones Steel Orchestra.