

OUR OPINION

Bye-bye Panorama

PANORAMA 1979 has expired amid a cloud of rhetoric and against a backdrop of heightened expectations among steelbandsmen based on promises which appear to have been made by spokesmen for the government.

One has only to read the letter of 6th February written on behalf of Minister of Culture Cuthbert Joseph to the President of Pan Trinbago, George Goddard to appreciate the dimensions of the communication problem.

The letter refers to "compromised proposals" which is a different thing entirely from proposals agreed to as a result of compromise by the parties concerned.

There is a reference also to a proposal to increase the fee for "Pan Around the Neck Bands" from \$1,200 to \$1,500. But not a word about pans on wheels.

Then the letter goes on to express sincerest appreciation for Mr. Goddard's "kind co-operation in affording my ministry the opportunity to present for the consideration of government a joint budget for the running of Panorama 1979."

It is quite clear from this last paragraph that the minister did not have the last word; the government [for government read Cabinet] would have final say.

But it would now seem Pan Trinbago felt going to Cabinet was mere formality; the thing had been approved at ministry level.

Yet at the same time if the ministry indeed put up a proposal for a \$4,000 appearance fee to each band appearing in the Panorama preliminaries and \$8,000 in the semi-finals, it had to be out of its tiny mind.

It may be that some bands deserve an appearance fee at that level. But, in all conscience, this cannot be the norm. Indeed one gets the impression that some bands go on stage for appearance sake and while one might appreciate their enthusiasm, when cold hard cash is involved this is another matter entirely.

It is a pity this matter was not thrashed out long before so that everybody would have known where they stood well in advance of the event.

One can forgive the panmen for being angry; they have been political footballs for too long. Over the years the Prime Minister has ceremoniously visited steelband theatres and headquarters. He has used his influence to have drum sets presented to them. At one time he was active in seeking sponsors for unsponsored steelbands.

Then there was a steelband consultation; pan tuners' meetings and all sorts of gimmicks. But, as the calypsonian sang, the steelbandsman failed to move forward.

The time was overripe for confrontation. But this has come at the wrong time and on the wrong issue.

For while \$4,000 may seem attractive bait to the Panorama competitor, it is meaningless in the long term as far as the future of the steelband and the steelbandsman is concerned.

This is what Mr. Goddard should be worried about and the direction in which he should channel his energies sparked by his abrasive personality.