

Late bands get the nod from pan prelim judges

By TERRY JOSEPH

THE considerable strain under which Panorama judges perform during preliminary round of competition leaves Pan Trinbago open to claims that its adjudicators may be less than alert during the performances of bands that play late in the programme.

The lapse resulted in Pan Trinbago having to uphold a protest from the InnCogen Pamberi Steel Orchestra, consequently including them in today's semi-final. But don't rush to blame the judges.

For continuity, the same panel must sit in judgement of all competing bands, at any stage of the competition. But the schedule is at least physically taxing and the reality is that most of the judges are senior citizens. Because of hostility from poor losers in the past, or traceable affiliation to competing bands, over the years it has been difficult to attract new non-aligned judges for pan competitions.

But the situation is becoming impossible.

In this year's example, the judges that sat at Skinner Park for the South/Central zonal finals, which incorporated both conventional and single-pan bands, finished their work shortly before 6 a.m. last Saturday. Seven hours later, they were expected to be fully alert at the Trincity Expo site for the East Zone finals, which then ran for some 14 hours, ending shortly before 4 a.m. Sunday.

But it got worse. The same judges were then required to catch the proverbial "40 winks" and show up by 1 p.m. on Sunday at the Queen's Park Savannah for the North Zone playoffs, for a show that lasted ten hours.

It was not unreasonable that somewhere in that demanding schedule, there would be lapses in alertness. In fact, by 2 a.m. Sunday, it was evident that the judges were beginning to feel the pressure.

At the East Zone playoffs, it was observed by this reporter that one of the judges was frequently nodding, taking some embarrassingly obvious sleeps on occasion. A

fellow judge frequently poked him in the ribs to keep him awake. Others were yawning and rubbing their eyes regularly—evidence that the pressure was taking its toll at the worst possible time.

Nor does the confusion end at simply staying awake. The question of amplification introduces fresh complications. Sound engineers invariably feel a professional requirement to have all bands enjoy the same volume through the public address system. A band of 50 players, being made to sound not unlike one fielding 100 performers, puts another kind of onus on the judges to discern the value added by electronics. In the event that they cannot unravel the difference, the band with fewer players enjoys a distinct advantage.

The bands also perform under varying acoustical conditions, further increasing the demand on the judges to clarify in their own minds, the disadvantages presented by the arenas in which some of the bands were required to present their music.