

Home for Pan this year vows Minister

MINISTER of Community Development and Culture, Joan Yuille-Williams, has promised to help Pan Trintago realise its dream of moving into its new Trincity headquarters by this year.

She was speaking at a news conference at City Hall, Port-of-Spain, yesterday, where she officially launched regional Carnival.

Pledging her support for Pan Trintago, Yuille-Williams said she would "take the fight to Cabinet."

"I intend to take a note to Cabinet (for funding)," she said.

"I felt that if an organisation could go so far on their own it says a lot."

A dispute over the cost of the pan body's unfinished headquarters at Orange Grove, Trincity, is at the centre of problems plaguing the project.

Work on the building ground to a halt because of increased production costs and late payments to contractors.

Clive Alexander, consulting architect on the project, said the final budget was \$7.6 million because Pan Trintago officials wanted an additional storey for a conference hall.

He said that at a sod-turning ceremony at the site last year, the \$7.6 million budget was made public.

"The real issue is, the scope was expanded before construction, and this was presented and made public during the sod-turning ceremony, in front of Board members and Government officials," Alexander said.

However, Pan Trintago president



Patrick Arnold discredits the figure.

"That is madness," he said.

"I would never have gone ahead with a \$7.8 million building when we only had \$3.6 million.

"That \$3.6 million is what I agreed to when the project started, including the conference hall."

Arnold said Pan Trintago had funds to build the facility because Government had taken over the pan in schools and panyard development projects.

He said until that move by the Government, there were special conditions placed on how his organisation spent its money.

Arnold said the bulk of Pan Trintago's money came from \$7.5 million promised to them by the 1986-91 NAR Government after the O'Halloran scandal.

He said in 1994, the Government released \$3.4 million to Panvesco (Pan Trintago Investment Company) and in 1999, the remainder of the money was distributed.

Kenny De Silva, chairman of Panvesco, admitted yesterday that there were two different budget valuations of the facility.

However, he said \$3.6 million was the initial figure.