

MLloye

LETTERS

Part of the history of Steelpan

THE EDITOR: I am horrified (but not surprised) by the story that two Americans (definitely white men) had patented in the USA a process for the manufacture of our

Steel Pan. What is even more surprising is the use of the phrase "Caribbean Steel pan" because prior to that happening Americans had always referred to the musical

instrument as the "Steel Drum" a name which I have tried unsuccessfully to get accepted in Trinidad and Tobago.

Five years ago during the Pan Jazz Festival the renowned Jazz Bassist David "Happy" Williams who also plays the National Instrument refused to accept the title "pan man".

"I am a drummer" he would say. He would also say "If you cut a large drum down to size it became a small drum not a pan." He also took pride in the fact that many centuries ago, Africans not only invented the drum as a musical instrument but it was also the world's first "telephone" and "radio".

Trinidadians never took him on. Thirty years ago I was having a chat with Lord Justice Aubrey Fraser (J/A) in his Chambers at Trinidad House when he said to me "Lawrence" (my slave name) you are always writing to the newspapers about all sorts of matters why don't you write about researching the history and patenting the steel band? Can't you do some thing to help those boys because if you don't some Jewish boys will be given a scholarship to come to Trinidad to research the steel band and after a year or two he

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would go back to America and write a paper or a book and he would be recognised as the world's authority on the steel band." He was talking against the back drop of the mutiny trials in which I was engaged. He then told me that "what is happening in the USA is that the Jews are establishing all sorts of "Trusts and Foundations" to educate young Jewish men and women in any endeavour of their choosing. I promised to look into the matter.

A few days later I told George Goddard (with whom I was quite friendly) about the conversation I had with Lord Justice Aubrey Fraser. "The man is right" Goddard told me, but he don't know how difficult it is to deal with the Steel band men. Is this one fighting that one and

that one fighting the other one, he said slowly. He nevertheless promised to "see what I could do." For my part I informed him that years ago I was Chief Clerk in the probate department at the law Firm of Fitzwilliam, Stone & Alcazar and I was also responsible for the registration of the Trade Marks Patents and Designs.

We parted company and agreed to meet in a few days time which we did, and I passed on to him outlines of the requirements for the registration of a Patent of Steel pan. He was grateful and again promised to "see what I could do." But his position was extremely difficult if not impossible, and so although we met many times nothing ever was heard of a patent until now.

Incidentally, in 1970 when I was Legal Counsel at Trinidad Tesoro and that Company decided to sponsor a Steelband "Tesoro Wild Cats" it was George Goddard who helped me draft and engross the contract which was signed between the Company and the Steelband. Incidentally also "Wildcats" is an oil exploration term.

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