

# STEELBAND IS VISION

AMONG our many Carnival visitors this year was a British woman who can almost be credited with having brought the steelpan into schools in London.

Audrey Dennett, 48, of Surrey, England, an inspector of music in schools, came to Trinidad on a scholarship awarded by the Commission for Racial Equality. While she was here Mrs Dennett visited eight

schools at different levels and attended children's Carnival competitions and "every Panorama contest."

But it was at the north/east Panorama preliminaries that Mrs Dennett saw a large steelband in action for the first time.

"I had been listening to the pan-round-the-neck bands and wondering what were the roof things in the

distance. As T and TEC Power Stars — the first big band for the day — appeared on stage my mouth must have dropped open as they kept on rolling in more and more pans," said Mrs Dennett.

What further caught Mrs. Dennett was what she calls the "audience involvement."

"It was so exciting, everybody was participating so I enjoyed not only listening to the bands but looking at the people," she said.

At home, Mrs Dennett said she always tries to impress on the players of the London Schools Steel Orchestra — of which she is the founder — that they must not just sound good but look good as well.

The school music inspector was first introduced to steelpans eight years ago.

## Entering The NINETIES



"A group of West Indian businessmen were promoting steelpan and I was invited to hear them play."

After she had heard this musical instrument, Mrs Dennett needed no further convincing and began encouraging schools in her area to include steelbands in their musical curriculum.

The idea caught on slowly but by 1977, Mrs Dennett said, more schools had got interested. Today about 50 schools in inner London have steelbands.

The best players of these bands are chosen for the London Schools Steel Orchestra.



Besides being responsible for this orchestra (Mrs Dennett has a degree from the Guildhall School of Music) she is also chairman of the panel of judges at the annual steelband festival.

This festival, however, is not a competition. Participating schools are given verbal criticisms on their performances.

While the majority of the players are of West Indian origin there are many British children learning to "beat pan" too.

"Most people in and around London love the sound of the steel and and like Trinidadian they react by getting up and dancing," said Mrs Dennett.

In her visits to the