

Tourist Board offers annual pan festival

THE Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board is willing to sponsor a month-long Steelband Festival annually aimed at attracting overseas visitors.

This is among proposals contained in a Paper submitted by the Board to the current three-day National Consultation on the Steelband.

The Board has expressed a partiality to the month of November for holding the festival, to be on alternate days of the finals of the Prime Minister's Best Village Competition. The Board says the plan would provide a full month of entertainment.

The Paper deals with the steelbandsman and takes in his role as performer, tuner, arranger, inventor and administrator.

It fears that the steelband will perish as an art form "unless satisfactory working conditions can be arranged for steelband performers."

The Board is in favour of:

- * A National Pan Theatre and a National Steel Orchestra.
- * An annual money prize to the person making the most outstanding contribution to the improvement of the steelband.
- * Instruments should be patented internationally.
- * Individual steelbandsmen should be trained.
- * Participating in the production of a documentary film on the steelband.

Other proposals and suggestions by the Board include:

RECOGNITION

* There should be recognition of the pan man by society for his contribution to the development of a unique form of cultural expression.

* His role in society would have to be determined by whether he is a professional entertainer or whether this is an extra-curricular activity.

If his role is that of professional entertainer he should be considered in the same way as a member of any orchestra. If on the other hand his role is that of extra-curricular activist, methods of obtaining employment should be found, with sponsors assisting in obtaining jobs for their respective bands.

If it felt that the number of persons comprising a steelband and the size of the instruments, which take up a lot of space, make it very expensive to hire

such a band, and that bands could only be used in large hotels and night clubs. It is also felt that this is the reason for the difficulty in finding a venue where the visitor could hear a "real" steelband every night of the week.

* The services of qualified musicians, technicians, engineers, and metallurgists, are a **must**, and the services of a qualified musician in the form of an arranger is of paramount importance for top performance.

* Unless satisfactory working conditions can be arranged for steelband performers, the steelband as an art form will perish. Also, lack of sponsorship as well as a sufficient number of large hotels capable of employing steelbands, can cause this art form to perish.

* Some salary scale, should be determined for the holders of the specific jobs -- as composer, tuner, arranger and conductor.

* It is felt that if all of the pans could not be standardised, at least the special larger pans should be standardised for overseas travel; also that a set of the standardised larger pans should be kept permanently in the Government Missions in countries in which steelbands often perform.

* The Business Community should have some representation on any Association in existence or that may be formed in the future, in view of its sponsorship of the steelband.

* Greater recognition should be given to the steelband, by mass media.

* All music should be in school curriculum, including steelband.

* The Board would make every effort to assist steelbands to obtain overseas tours and contracts.