



**REMARKS TO BE DELIVERED BY MR. LARRY HOWAI,
CHAIRMAN – THE NATIONAL GAS COMPANY OF TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO LIMITED AT THE FORMAL OPENING
OF THE NGC SPONSORED STEELFESTT
AT NAPA
Wednesday, May 3rd 2012**

The Honourable Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar

The Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture and Multiculturalism – Mr. Winston Peters

Honourable Minister of Planning – Mr. Beau Tewarie

Mr. Keith Diaz, President of Pan Trinbago and other members of the Pan Trinbago Executive

President of NIHERST and Chairperson of the SteelFesttt Committee - Mrs. Maureen Manchouck

Other members of the SteelFesttt Committee:

- Mr. David Dedier
- Mr. Brian Awang
- Mr. Peter Aleong

Members of The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago (NGC) management team

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Other Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

This space that we are in, is named after Lord Kitchener,
one of the greatest calypsonians—ever.

Kitch had a special relationship with the steel pan.

He claimed that he wrote the first ever calypso about steel pan
just after the War, in 1946, called *Beat of the Steelband*.

Over 50 years Kitch wrote about steelbands, pan composers, more pan,
no pan, pan in ‘A’ Minor, and flag women (which some think is critical
to the real enjoyment of pan!). His last tribute to the steel band?

He wished it a happy *Pan Birthday*. “Everyone celebrate
[the national instrument]”, he said, “before it’s too late”.

Kitch is looking down on us today, smiling that big smile of his,
maybe humming a few bars of one of his great calypsoes:

Pan Is Here To Stay.

I re-affirm that, ladies and gentlemen: *Pan is here to stay.*

SteelFesTT makes sure of that.

There is a wonderful Japanese word, ‘nemawashi’, whose rough translation is ‘to prepare the roots’. A Japanese gardener might use the term ‘nemawashi’ to describe the tiny, time-consuming pains he takes to transplant a small tree, or to grow a bonsai.

The whole process might take several years ...

the period necessary to prepare the roots so that the little tree can stand the shock of occupying a bigger space.

The same care and patience is necessary in ventures that are as complex as SteelFesTT. We are ‘preparing the roots’ for steel pan to occupy a bigger space in the world, just as we would do for any product of any business.

Not everything important can be accomplished in a week, a month,
or even a year. The Japanese word ‘nemawashi’ is a valuable reminder
that patience and care accomplish things beyond
what sheer managerial drive, or a big event like SteelFesTT, can do.

As the 33rd President of the United States, Harry S Truman said,
it is quite amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care
who gets the credit. President Truman visited Trinidad in 1947 and
Lord Kitchener sang for him.

Back then, the cultivation of steel band music as a genre of its own
had started. The American troops stationed here had learnt to
love steel pan music, and play the steel pan.

They took pan music and their newly acquired talents
back to the USA when they returned home.

Today, the world looks to Trinidad & Tobago to lead the way
in the evolution of the steel pan ... not just as an instrument, or music, but
also as a Brand.

For NGC, the strengthening of the Trinidad & Tobago Steel Pan product is vital for it is ‘culture’, fundamentally, that defines whether a country is civilized.

Increasingly, NGC supports ‘legacy’ projects. We define these as initiatives, such as SteelFesTT, which preserve and nurture indigenous art forms.

That is why I am so very pleased to be standing here today, representing NGC. I commend the Government and our Minister of Culture for their commitment to the vision of SteelFesTT.

With the Government as facilitator, the dream of Pan Trinbago, and the goal of the SteelFesTT committee, has materialized.

This evening all of the stakeholders in SteelFesTT stand on the edge of a crucible. We can only guess at the gold that will be smelted here over the next seven days. We are not looking for quantity, but quality: a thoughtful strategy for the way ahead for the steel pan of Trinidad & Tobago.

In closing, I would like to thank the organizers for making us part
of this event and to wish you every success over the next seven (7) days
of SteelFesTT.

I thank you.

May 03, 2012