

FORMAL OPENING OF THE NGC SPONSORED STEELFESTT

NAPA

Wednesday, May 3 2012

MR. LARRY HOWAI, CHAIRMAN, NGC

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

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

Honourable Minister of Planning – Mr. Beau Tiwarie

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism – Mrs. Juliana Boodram

Mr. Peter Kanhai, Office of the Prime Minister (Chairman, Sport & Culture Board and Management)

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

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

Other members of the SteelFest Committee:

- Mr. David Dedier (Co-ordinator)
- 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

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This space that we are in, is named after Lord Kitchener, one of the two greatest calypsonians—ever. He, and the Mighty Sparrow ... the two giants of Calypso ... reigned side by side.

Kitch had a special relationship with steel pan. He claimed 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 calypsos: *Pan Is Here To Stay*.

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

Seven days from today, it will all be over:

- The concerts with local and foreign bands — what I call the *practice* and *spectacle* of pan;
- The conference with its focus on everything pan, and carving out a place for pan on the world's stage — that's the *theory* and *strategy* of pan;
- The *community* of pan embraces these and the many touch points outside of the formal events, where the participants and the general public will create their own synergies.

The huge, visible effort of SteelFesTT will be over. But I believe that in seven days, the real worth of SteelFesTT will have just begun.

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:

- . opening up new markets
- . training craftsmen
- . grooming new players
- . inspiring arrangers
- . educating customers about novel uses of pan.

Talking of which, you can attend a session next Wednesday on *Steel Pan as Music Therapy!* Who knew?

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.

This reminds me of ... not exactly a story ... but a *model* that details the six phases of a project.

- . Stage 1 is Enthusiasm.
- . This is quickly followed by Disillusionment and Panic.
- . Stage 4 is Search For The Guilty.
- . Stage 5 is Punishment Of The Innocent. I think that is where we are at now! Maureen as showing me her list earlier.
- . Stage 6 is Showering Praise and Credit On The Non-Participants.

Actually, it is quite amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit. Harry S Truman said that ...33rd President of the United States. He visited

Trinidad in 1947. 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 learned 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 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: it is 'culture', fundamentally, that defines whether a country is civilized.

NGC is a state-owned company. Our mandate, on behalf of our citizens, is to be integrally involved in shaping culture. Our product, Trinidad & Tobago Natural Gas, has enabled NGC to develop and foster nation-building initiatives in communities the length and breadth of the country. Some of them are very public, like our sponsorship of SteelFesTT, or the recently concluded NGC Bocas LitFest. Some of our involvement is low-key, such as the many excellent steel bands we sponsor every year, which otherwise would not have the resources to:

- . get instruments
- . attract arrangers and players
- . enthuse their communities
- . travel to the judging venues, or ...
- . to win at Panorama

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 happy to be standing here today, representing NGC. I commend the Government for its 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.

Tonight 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.

I will close on a fable, which shows what I mean. It is about a lioness and a vixen. They had both just given birth, and were comparing their young. The vixen had a huge litter of cubs. She looked over to the lioness and remarked, with a sneer, that the lioness only ever had one cub. "Ah yes," said the lioness, "but that one is a lion..."

Ladies and gentlemen, enjoy the SteelFesTT experience.

Thank you.