

PoS vendors complain of low alcohol sales

By **Sherlan Ramsubhag**

sherlan.ramsubhag@trinidadexpress.com

STREET bar operators in Downtown Port of Spain say a change to the Carnival Monday parade route left them facing sharply reduced sales, with some reporting earnings less than half of what they made last year.

The *Express* spoke with a few of them who were set up under tents along Broadway and South Quay on Monday.

They said in previous years, masqueraders would make their way from South Quay through Broadway, to the Queen's Park Savannah-but the change in route from Broadway to Charlotte Street this year has resulted in big losses for them.

One vendor who has been selling alcoholic beverages for almost eight years said while people were buying them, sales were low compared to last year's Carnival Monday.

Another man, who is a co-owner of the same bar, said around 4.30 p.m. last year on Carnival Monday he would have made between \$10,000 and \$12,000; however, for that same period he made only about \$4,000.

A woman with another stall nearby said in addition to the change of route, she believed the increase in alcohol prices contributed to the low sales.

However, she said, 'Trinidadians will drink anyhow you take it, they will drink. We like tuh party but with the change of route, nobody is going to go out of their way to come up here (Broadway) when everything is on the main street.'

She continued: 'Apart from that we have no bands coming up this way (Broadway), so I don't know what they do. No bands are coming up on this side, the place is dead.'

The woman said she had been selling alcohol during Carnival for about six years. She said in previous years her sales for the same period amounted to about \$5,000-but yesterday she made just a couple hundred dollars. She explained that while the low sales made her feel regretful of her decision to set up her bar, she was hopeful and prayed that business would have picked up yesterday.

Another vendor who said he has been setting up his bar for about 12 years reported: 'This year you have to work a little harder for sales to take place because fewer trucks are passing.'

'Yuh probably getting a truck to pass ever hour and a half, and then the masqueraders and spectators are actually bring their own drinks now. It's a bit more challenging...', said the vendor.

He explained, like the other vendors, he got more sales last year. 'At this time last year I would have been crossing \$5,000 comfortable, and I made under that today.'

Another vendor on South Quay, who said this was his second year setting up a bar on the street for Carnival, described his sales last year as 'extremely good', given that it was his first year. 'But this year it is kind of slow but it is coming along, I can't complain,' said the vendor.

'Last year I had to restock constantly but now, the stock that I buy now it did not run out...', he said. He also expressed his belief that the increase in alcohol prices was also a contributor to low sales.