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**Title:** Memorandum by R Stokes, Department of the Taoiseach, with additional notes by D Nally, Department of the Taoiseach, giving their views on the proposed national day of reconciliation.

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*Q. TA 20/5/73 on a new file entitled as below 11/4*

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

*Spoke Taoiseach. This again  
11/11/73 will raise the  
when he has had the  
letter 11/10/73  
11/4*

Uimhir.....

*Mr. Stoker  
11/14*

PROPOSED NATIONAL DAY OF RECONCILIATION

Rúnaí Cunta

*Secretary.  
Pl. see note overlay.  
9/4*

Draft memorandum from the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs for discussion by the Government.

The idea of one single commemoration for those who died for Ireland or were killed in Civil strife is basically a good one. The idea had already been mooted in regard to commemorating the civil war, see copy of Parliamentary Question on attached file and correspondence on the subject. A proposal that the matter should be discussed by the Whips of the political parties did not go ahead, but this could provide the basis for working out the present proposal.

The great merit of setting aside one specific day is that it could embrace all the anniversaries that arise and which will be added to by events in the North (the Bloody Sundays etc.) To be fully effective, however, it would want to be all-embracing and to range over all existing celebrations, to include even the Armistice Day celebrations at Islandbridge (see file attached).

I see difficulty about the choice of St. Patrick's Day as the day of reconciliation. It is the National Festival Day and even though ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> climate does not always favour such an approach, a change to a more austere purpose could meet with strong resistance - the Secretary has already expressed this view. It is also the National Day of Ireland and would not be subscribed to as such by, for example, Protestant opinion in Northern Ireland. Many in this part of the country and the minority opinion in the North might press for the taking over of the 12th July as the day of reconciliation and the imposition of an austere character on that day. There is something to be said for picking Easter as the time. There are difficulties because it is the anniversary of the Easter Rising, but it has Christian associations of renewal and re-awakening which would seem appropriate to the regenerative purpose which a day of reconciliation would have in mind. It is at present a modestly-celebrated day unlike, for example, Christmas Day, and is therefore available, so to speak, for exploitation in the way envisaged. The choice of a new day entirely might be best but this might have an artificial quality and might not "catch on" as much as an existing day such as Easter.

Parallel to any such proposal, having as it does an ecumenical function, there would have to be consideration of the State's involvement at the moment in the activities of the various churches. I am thinking in particular of the way in which the State is associated with such ceremonies as the installation and consecration of Catholic Bishops; the presence of members of the Government and of the President at Catholic ceremonies in contrast to their being represented at non-Catholic ceremonies; the association of Ministers with Catholic services such as the blessing of schools and institutions (there should, I feel, be a Ministerial official opening in these cases, with a separate religious service); the practice of the President and of members of the Government kissing the ring of a Catholic prelate; the

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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Uimhir.....

participation of members of the Government in the religious services of one particular religion, for example, reading the Epistle at a Mass; the holding of a special Mass for the opening of the Oireachtas and for the inauguration of the President at which all state dignitaries attend, while at the same time there is representation at Army Colonel or Dáil Deputy level at the Protestant services. I think that all of these manifestations of the "special position" would have to be reviewed in the context of the day of ecumenical, non-sectarian reconciliation. They should perhaps be reconsidered anyway.



9 Aibreán 1973

Secretary,

I agree with Mr Stokes. The attached files show support for a day of national <sup>commemoration but</sup> I doubt if a day of prayer only - or of ecumenical services organised with the ecclesiastical authorities - would catch on, no matter what our wishes or intentions. The attempted celebration of EEC entry is perhaps a precedent. Very few were interested.

As Mr Stokes says, some further consideration would be desirable on functions and ceremonies generally. This could cover the question of giving body to the day of reconciliation, perhaps by involving industry, agriculture and the services. The more people are involved the more impact the idea would have. [M.O.V.E. year is a further example of non-intervent in this type of promotion.] We have not had the time to consider the impact

of the proposal, in the draft memorandum, on tourism. Directly the effect may be small but indirectly the publicity which parades etc. give this country could well be considerable. Would New York tolerate parades any more when we at home don't have them?

Perhaps then a recommendation from the new assistant secretary on the information side would be useful - before or after consultation with other interests.

su 9/4/73.

\* About £100,000 was spent on it. few could say what it was about.