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Title: Department of the Taoiseach: memorandum on proposed national day of commemoration and reconciliation to be held on St Patrick's Day, with notes of representations and suggestions on this theme by members of government, interest groups etc.

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St. Patrick's Day - Commemoration/Reconciliation1. Government decisions 10/7/1973

- (a) St. Patrick's Day should be set aside as a Day of National Commemoration and Reconciliation.
- (b) The ceremonies on the Day should include special ecumenical services, two minutes' silence for those who died for Ireland and for the victims of civil strife in Ireland, and prayers for peace and reconciliation between Irish people of different traditions.
- (c) Once inaugurated the Day of National Commemoration and Reconciliation should be the only day on which the State would participate in public commemoration.

(Note re (a) On 11/7/1973 the Department of the Taoiseach requested the Department of Defence to avoid using the word "ecumenical" in any publicity arising out of the Government decision).

2. Suggestions of Minister for Posts and Telegraphs 13/7/1973.

In a letter dated 13/7/1973 the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs suggested that

- (a) the Day of Reconciliation and Commemoration should be organised on an entirely civil and religious basis without any military participation at all, other than the presence of senior officers of the Defence Forces as part of the establishment of the State and
- (b) there might be a separate Defence Forces Day, with appropriate military parades, perhaps on 11 July.

3. Adjutant General's view (17/7/1973) regarding Defence Forces Day.

A minute dated 17/7/1973 from the Adjutant General's Branch conveyed the Adjutant General's opinion that some day should be set aside which the Defence Forces should mark with appropriate presence and ceremonial.

The Minister endorsed the minute: "Army Day" or "Defence Forces Day" 11th July, 1973.

(Presumably "1973" in the endorsement was not meant to have a limiting effect).

4. Statement issued by Government Information Services 15/7/1973.

The phraseology of this statement differed in some respects from that of the Defence memorandum of 4/7/1973 from which the Government decisions of 10/7/1973 flowed.

(Item: The memorandum referred to a Day of National Commemoration and Reconciliation: the statement

referred to a Day of National Commemoration.

Item: The statement projected re-dedication of the people of Ireland, under St. Patrick, to the pursuit of peace: the memorandum projected ^{prayer} for peace and reconciliation).

5. Tentative ideas of Minister (sent to Minister for Posts and Telegraphs 21/8/1973).

The following (in summary) tentative ideas were expressed by the Minister in a note which he sent to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs 21/8/'73)-

- (a) Principal religious denominations to be asked to arrange special ceremonies to mark "the Day" - joint ceremonies being most welcome.
- (b) Government to be represented at ceremonies at (a).
- (c) Main ceremonies to be in Dublin but "The Day" to be celebrated as widely as possible (including in Northern Ireland); where no special ceremonies, special prayers to be added to normal services.
- (d) Main state ceremony might be at Garden of Remembrance, with Military ceremonial (to be decided)
- (e) State reception in Dublin Castle.
- (f) Annual Arbour Hill ceremony (for 1916 Leaders) should possibly be allowed exceptionally.
- (g) Bodenstown, Easter, Beal na Blath etc. to be discontinued as State functions - but private groups to be welcome to stage their own ceremonies.
- (h) St Patrick's Day Industrial Parade to be discussed with organisers thereof to ensure no clash.

The covering letter with the note broached the question of what Department should look after the matter - with an indication that it was not quite appropriate to Defence except as regards military participation in the ceremonies.

6. Representations from Dublin Brigade Old IRA (11/9/'73)

In a letter dated 11/9/1973 to the Taoiseach the Brigade expressed disappointment that "in a matter that means so much to us" they were not consulted, and requested if possible, before the date of Day was finalised, an opportunity to express their opinion.

The matter was discussed by representatives of the Department of Defence with representatives of the Brigade on 11/12/1973. Briefly the Brigade's attitude is that one day should be fixed for the commemoration of all who gave their lives for Ireland and that this day should be 11 July (i.e. the anniversary of the Truce) and not St. Patrick's Day. They consider that St. Patrick's Day has religious and sporting significance but no commemorative significance for Irish people.

7. 11th July as Independence Day and attendance of Army at Beal na Blath in future years.

In a letter dated 19/9/1973 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, at the instance of Mr. Sean Lynch, Mosney, Co. Meath, raised the question of the 11th July (date of Anglo-Irish Truce) being designated as Independence Day and also the question of the Army returning to Beal na Blath

in future years (as regards the latter question; if not, why not?).

(Note: G.N.E. celebrates Lá na bhFiann on the Sunday nearest to 11 July each year)

8. 12th July as National Holiday as well as St Patrick's Day

In a letter dated 13/10/1973 to the Taoiseach Mr Matthew J. Gormley, Malahide (as organiser of the Inter-County Section of the St Patrick's Day Parade urged that the Government should "declare a second National holiday for the thirty two counties on the 12th of July." His line of argument is that this would create a better understanding "between both communities", would show "our mutual respect" for our Protestant countrymen and by holding a parade in the South on that day we could help in our small way to bring to an end the violence and bloodshed in the north of our country. (By "we" in the context of a parade he probably means the organisers of the St Patrick's Day Parade).

9. Views of Minister for Posts and Telegraphs regarding the "National Day" (7/11/1973)

In a letter dated 7/11/1973 the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs expressed the following views:-

- (a) On the Commemoration Aspect, there should be religious ceremonies (as ecumenical as possible), with State representation.
- (b) The commemoration should take the form of a generally agreed special prayer, prominently included in the normal services for the day - the commemoration to take place in churches, cathedrals or other places with religious associations.
- (c) There should not be State participation at ceremonies at the Garden of Remembrance or Arbour Hill - because such ceremonies are associated with particular traditions or groups of traditions. (This view is grounded on the concept that acceptance by more than one side in Northern Ireland of the proposed celebration would depend on this point. However, the point might be ignored - since 32 County celebration is unlikely to be achieved - so as to ease the healing of the Civil War wounds).
- (d) As to the Reconciliation aspect, there should be a State Reception with a suitably variegated guest list - with possibly similar receptions by local authorities, to spread the good will.
- (e) Responsibility for organising "the Day" should rest with the Dept of the Taoiseach (because of the importance and sensitivity of the matter), perhaps with an advisory Committee including the Minister and the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs.

10. St. Patrick's Day Parade, Dublin

Prior to World War II an Army Parade had been for years a feature of St Patrick's Day in Dublin.

In more recent times (broadly from the 1950s onwards) there has been an Industrial/Commercial/Cultural Parade under the auspices of the National Agricultural and Industrial Development Association (which apparently became the National Development Association in 1967). The organising of this annual event was taken over in 1970 by Dublin Regional Tourism Organisation Limited. There has been military participation in the event (e.g. Army Band, F.C.A. Colour Party, Contingent of Military Police). Prior to 1971 the Band was made available at a fee, but since then no charge has been made for it.

11. Comments and recommendations

The following comments and recommendations regarding the various points referred to in preceding paragraphs are furnished:-

<u>Item</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
(a) Title of Day	The first draft memo from the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs called it "Day of Reconciliation". The Defence memorandum to the Government (with the agreement of the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs) called it "Day of National Commemoration and Reconciliation". The statement issued by the Government Information Services, announcing the Government decision, said "Day of National Commemoration."	The title should be "Day of National Commemoration".
(b) Responsible Department	The Minister for Defence has indicated tentatively that responsibility did not seem quite appropriate to Defence - except as regards military participation. The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs has suggested, on grounds of importance and sensitivity, that responsibility should rest with the Department of the Taoiseach. Normally the Department of the Taoiseach does not discharge this type of responsibility and is not particularly geared for it in terms of staff. Aside from the Department of the Taoiseach the matter would seem to belong appropriately enough to the Department of Defence.	Responsibility for organising "the Day" should be assigned to the Department of Defence

AM
28/12/73

<u>Item</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
(c) Commemoration (= religious) aspect	The thinking on this point is that there should be religious ceremonies (joint, if possible), in places of worship, with special prayers - Northern Ireland to be comprehended in the ceremonies. If the principal religious denominations can arrange for the holding of ceremonies in Northern Ireland it will be all to the good.	A special prayer should be included in the normal services on "the Day" and there should be State representation at selected services e.g. Pro-Cathedral and St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. The possibility of having ceremonies in Northern Ireland should be explored with the principal religious denominations.
(d) Reconciliation (= civil) aspect	The original concept was that the ceremonies would be religious (draft memorandum of Minister for Posts and Telegraphs). In as much as acceptance of the concept by Northern Ireland is aimed at, there should be avoidance of civil ceremonies as distinct from State and local receptions.	There should be a State reception in Dublin Castle and local receptions, one per county.
(e) Garden of Remembrance, G.P.O., Arbour Hill, Bodenstown, Beal na Blath	The underlying idea of "the Day" is that it would be "one Day" on which the State would commemorate all who died..... (individuals and groups being free to hold their own commemorations). The crunch point is whether the State would participate in the annual ceremonies in May at Arbour Hill. These ceremonies are State organised, being hosted by the Minister for Defence.	From St. Patrick's Day, 1974 the State should not organise or participate in any commemorations apart from the ceremonies on the day itself.
(f) 12th July	Mr. M.J. Gormley's suggestion - 8 above - is obviously well-intentioned (<u>creating a better understanding between "both communities"</u> - whoever they are). His theme of "our mutual respect for our Protestant countrymen" is unhappy. In effect the idea is that the Battle of the Boyne would be adopted as the basis for a Second National Holiday. Apart from the fact that there ought to be only one National Holiday, the 12th July is not a day which - in the words of the Government statement issued on 15/8/1973 - all Irishmen can share, irrespective of their tradition	The 12th July should not be declared a second National Holiday.

10/11/73

<u>Item</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
	denomination or politics.	
(g) St. Patrick's Day Industrial Parade (in Dublin)	There is no conflict between <i>this parade and</i> proposed commemoration of all who died..... Timings will be important and arrangements should be made with the Parade Organisers to ensure that the Parade will not co-incident at any vital point-locationally - with the travelling of the President, Taoiseach etc to commemorate ceremonies.	
(h) Defence Forces (or Army) Day - 11th July	The Minister for Defence has indicated that the 11th July should be set aside as Defence Forces (or Army) Day. The day would be marked with military parade(s) and ceremonial. Being the anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Truce, the 11th July is already an Army holiday.	The 11th July should be marked as Defence Forces (or Army) Day.

MM
28/12/73