

# WASHINGTON WEEK

By Harris Ellsworth, M. C.

The ordinary run of news which appears in your newspapers during the closing days of a session of Congress must be most confusing to those who have attempted to follow congressional activities during the year. Action on any big bill involves numerous steps. What happens to a bill at each step is duly reported. Sometimes, however, the news report on a committee vote on the bill or a preliminary vote by either House or Senate gives an impression of finality. Then in the closing days a number of such bills get back into the news again because of final congressional action in both houses on what we call conference reports. That is the real final action. When a conference report is approved by both houses the bill goes to the president.

Even at the risk of repeating some "primer class" details, I think it might be helpful toward following congressional activity to recite the steps through which every important bill must pass before it becomes a law.

Assume the bill originates in the House. (Except money bills, legislation may originate in either house). It is referred to a committee. The committee holds public hearings. The bill is then considered by the committee in executive session and eventually "reported" or sent to the house for action. Then the reporting committee requests the Rules Committee to grant a resolution to send the bill to the floor, and appears before the rules committee to explain the bill. When a rule is granted, the majority leadership sets a time for floor action on the rule and the bill. The house first must adopt a resolution to consider the bill—the 'rule'—and then it goes into action on the bill.

The house works the bill over, often adopting several amendments on the floor. When passed, the bill is sent to the senate where it goes through a process similar to that in the house.

As passed by the senate, such a bill is often vastly different in text from the house-approved version. It becomes necessary therefore to reconcile the differences between the two houses, so a "conference committee" is named by the appointment of members from the house and senate committees which handled the bill.

Such a conference group has broad powers with respect to re-writing the legislation with the result that the final draft as prepared by the conference often becomes an interesting combination of the expressions of both houses.

The procedure with respect to the final clearance of a conference report by both houses is somewhat technical and often a bit involved, so suffice to say that during this last week you will be reading quite a little about house or senate votes

on conference reports—especially those on appropriation bills. It is well to remember, though, that there is no finality about any action on a bill until the conference version is approved by both house and senate. Until that action is complete there is a possibility of changes in the wording of a bill.

The air is beginning to clear so far as my personal plans for the immediate future are concerned. Helen and I will drive directly to our home at Roseburg after attending the Republican convention at Chicago. I hope we may arrive there about the 15th of July. I shall then go to Portland where I will take part in a "field conference" being conducted by the Bureau of Land Management of the Department of the Interior, together with several members of the Houth Public Lands Committee (the official name of this com-

mittee now is the "Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs"). This conference will be held July 17, 18 and 19. The meetings are technical sessions in charge of the Bureau and will not be public, but I have hopes of being able to arrange an informal conference with some of the members of the committee and officials of the O. & C. counties for the purpose of dis-

cussing pending legislation which affects the O. & C. lands. Just how this idea will work out I do not know—but I am working on it.

Miss Ruth Newton of Portland spent the week-end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Newton.

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