are readily agreed to by the other house, the bill then is routed to the White House for signing. However, if the opposite chamber basically alters the bill submitted to it, the measure usually is "sent to conference."

Conference

A conference undertakes to harmonize conflicting House and Senate versions of a legislative bill. The conference is staffed by interested senior Members, appointed by the presiding officers of the two houses, from the committees which managed the bills. This charges the Members of one house who are most familiar with the bill with the duty of maintaining their chamber's position in the face of amending actions by the conferees (or "managers") of the other house.

Frequently the ironing out of difficulties takes days or even weeks. Conferences on knotty appropriations bills sometimes are particularly drawn out.

As a conference proceeds, conferees reconcile their differences, but generally they grant concessions only insofar as they remain sure that the chamber they represent will accept the compromises. Sometimes uncertainty over this, or the positive refusal of a chamber to back down on a disputed amendment, results in an impasse, and the bills die in conference even though each was approved by its sponsoring chamber.

Conferees sometimes go back to their respective chambers for further instructions, when they report certain portions in disagreement.

When the conferees have reached agreement, they prepare a conference report, explaining why they did—or did not—retain some amendments, and cut out others. The reports are the justifications to their respective houses of the actions of the conferees, and the explanations, in document form, must be submitted to each house. Conference reports, with an explanation by the House conferees, are always printed in the House. In the Senate an explanation is often made orally by one of the conferees.

The conference report must be approved by each house. Consequently, approval of the report is approval of the compromise bill worked out.

Final Steps

If the President approves the bill he signs it, dates it and usually writes the word "approved" on the document. If he does not sign within 10 days (Sundays excepted) and Congress is in session, the bill becomes law without his signature.

However, should Congress adjourn before the 10 days expire, and the President has failed to sign the measure, it does not become law. This procedure is called the pocket veto. Occasionally a President vetoes a bill by refusing to sign it and returning it to the Congress with a message stating his reasons. If no action is taken there on the message, the bill affected dies. Sometimes, however, Congress attempts to override the President's veto and enact the bill. This requires a two-thirds vote of those present, who must number a quorum and vote by roll call.

If the President's veto is overridden by a two-thirds vote in both houses, the bill becomes law. Otherwise it is dead, and can be revived only by re-introduction and routing through the process all bills undergo.

BE AN ALERT AND INFORMED CITIZEN

Don't get the idea that one person alone can't affect what Congress does and how our government is run. Whether you voted for the Democrats or the Republicans, there is plenty you can do and say that will carry lots of weight.

In the first place, think of government as being just like any other product or service you buy. Certainly, you're careful when you consider buying a new car, a home, an insurance policy, or calling a TV repairman. You want the best quality and service you can get for your money.

And certainly you want the government to give you the best buy for your tax money. Of course, the problem here is how you can be sure the government you're getting is the best buy. To help you decide, you can test each proposal Congress debates and each measure the President requests by asking these, or other, logical questions:

- Does it fit a real need?
- Will it tend to raise prices of what you will have to buy in the future?
- Does it benefit one group or interest at the expense of another?
- Will it result in increased taxes?
- Is it wasteful of your tax money?
- Is it something you could provide better for yourself than through the government?

Of course, you just can't make up your mind out of thin air. You have to be informed in order to make sound decisions. You've got to be sufficiently interested in getting the best buy for your