

O'Neill Urges Truce With Nixon on Bills

9/5/73
By Richard L. Lyons
Washington Post Staff Writer

House Majority Leader Thomas P. O'Neill (D-Mass.), most partisan of congressional Democratic leaders, said yesterday that Congress and President Nixon should try to work together on legislation rather than continue battles that produce only bills that are vetoed and die.

Noting that the President lacks the votes to get his legislation passed and that the Democratic Congress lacks the two-thirds vote necessary to override his vetoes, O'Neill, said, "We've got to find an accommodation on bills."

O'Neill's proposal is to call in Melvin R. Laird, a former House member and now a counselor to the President, to act as a sort of go-between in attempting to develop a better working relationship between Congress and Mr. Nixon.

O'Neill said House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) likes the idea. Laird has gone out of his way to express a conciliatory tone toward Congress since he replaced Watergate casualty John D. Ehrlichman as the President's top domestic adviser.

O'Neill told a reporter he'd propose calling Laird to the Hill and saying:

"Look, we couldn't talk with Ehrlichman and (H. R.) Haldean (former White House



REP. THOMAS O'NEILL
... seeks accommodation

chief of staff who also resigned because of Watergate), but you're a former member. The President treats Congress like a stepchild. Why can't we work together? Why can't we treat Congress like a co-equal branch? Let's try to get out a solid program instead of us fighting him on impoundment and him coming back with vicious veto messages about irresponsible spending."

One of the last actions the President took before Congress left on vacation a month ago was to veto an emergency health service bill, a veto the

See CONGRESS, A12, Col. 1

O'Neill Urges Truce With Nixon on Bills

CONGRESS, From A1

Senate voted to override and which the House will vote on next week. Soon after Congress returns today, Mr. Nixon is expected to veto the minimum wage bill.

It would be his sixth veto of the year. None has been overridden.

Congress and the President appeared to be headed toward a spirit of accommodation last spring after Congress found itself unable to override vetoes. But some of the issues that di-

vide them seem too deep for compromise.

For instance, two bills that seek to limit the President's power to wage undeclared war or to refuse to spend appropriated funds seem certain to be vetoed since they seek to limit the President's power.

But there are areas, such as the levels of health, education and welfare spending or new manpower training legislation, where Laird achieved some expertise while in Congress and where he might help produce compromise acceptable to both sides.

At a press briefing yesterday, White House spokesman Gerald L. Warren said while in California Mr. Nixon had reviewed legislative priorities and that this would become "manifest" in the weeks ahead.

The President is scheduled to meet this week with Republican congressional leaders to go over the status of the legislative program. To spell it out more clearly, the President may send Congress a public statement of legislation he wants passed before the end of this session.

Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) said in an interview there is nothing more Congress can do to fight inflation and rising interest rates, and that it is up to the President to hold down living costs with stricter wage-price controls such as were imposed in Phase II.