

Butler: No Joy

By Stephen Green

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The agony of Rep. M. Caldwell Butler (R-Va.) ended shortly after 3 p.m. yesterday when he informed his fellow members of the House Judiciary Committee that his "present inclination" is to vote for the impeachment of President Nixon.

"There will be no joy in it for me," Butler told the committee. Talking later to a reporter in a Rayburn Building corridor he said: "I'm relieved it's over. I've probably agonized over this more than any other decision I've ever made."

Butler, the only Virginia member of the Judiciary Committee, is a Republican from Roanoke who voted in support of the President's position 75 per cent of the time last year. His decision could have an impact on the votes of moderate

and conservative Republicans when, as is now expected, the impeachment question is reported by the Committee to the full House.

In fact, late yesterday afternoon one Republican House staffer said: "They're (Republican Congressmen) all talking about Butler's decision in the cloakrooms. They respect him."

Butler later said he still hopes the President will come forward with evidence that will persuade him not to vote to impeach Mr. Nixon for "obstruction of justice and abuse of power."

"But I don't expect anything will come out to change my mind," he said.

"Looking back at it," Butler said, "I've been horrified from the first day when the staff started pulling the evidence together for us. That's when I felt it."

in Impeachment Vote

There was not one particular witness, nor one single document or tape recording that convinced him that a vote for impeachment would be the course he would decide to follow, Butler said.

"It was the total cumulative effect," he explained.

Butler said he finally made up his mind when he went home last week—partly to make a campaign appearance with Vice President Gerald Ford—and discussed the impeachment proceedings with his wife. "She agreed with my decision," he said.

"I turned it over in my mind and started realizing what was going on over there at the White House with all those guys. It's an American tragedy. A classic American tragedy."

During the 15 minutes allotted him in yesterday's Judiciary Committee impeachment

debate, Butler related how difficult it will be for him to cast his vote for impeachment.

He described "how distasteful this proceeding is for me." He stated he still has pride in the "significant accomplishments of the administration of Richard Nixon."

He noted "there are those who believe I would not be here today if it were not for our joint effort in 1972. And I am deeply grateful for the many kindnesses and courtesies" the President "has shown me over the years. I am not unmindful of the loyalty I owe him."

Yet, Butler said, Watergate is the "shame" of the Republican Party. "We cannot indulge ourselves the luxury of patronizing or excusing the misconduct of our own people. These things have happened in our house and it is our re-

sponsibility to do what we can to clear it up."

"If we fail to impeach," he said, "we have condoned and left unpunished a course of conduct totally inconsistent with the reasonable expectations of the American people."

Rep. Carlos J. Moorhead of California, another Republican member of the Committee walked up to Butler in the hallway after his speech. "I guess politically you made the right decision," Moorhead said.

Butler shook his head. "You don't know my district," he replied.

A young man hurried by and called out: "That was a wonderful speech Mr. Butler. It was great, just great."

Butler thought for a moment and said softly: "Yeah, but he doesn't vote in my district."