



The Crucible Of Impeachment

— Joseph Kraft

FROM THE crucible of impeachment there now emerges a new national model of the presidency. It combines Southern constitutionalism and the progressive idealism of the West with Eastern liberalism.

It reasserts the principle that legitimacy has to reach beyond personal success to rest on trust in the people and their surrogates in the Congress and the courts.

Perhaps the finest role in the impeachment process has been played by the South. Southerners are peculiarly disposed to intense patriotism and have been prone to stand up and salute any President.

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BUT FOUR Southern traditionalists on the Judiciary Committee — Caldwell Butler, a Virginia Republican, and Democrats Walter Flowers, James Mann and Ray Thornton from Alabama, South Carolina and Arkansas, respectively — took their stand against Mr. Nixon. All four delivered notable statements.

Flowers reached beyond the mere constitutional form to consider end results. He said: "The institutions of this country have been set up by the people to serve them, to carry out those functions that are necessary to a peaceful and a free society. They are not created to serve the interests of one man or one group of men or the political gain of anyone."

Progressive idealism found expression

in the remarks of such Democrats as Jerome Waldie and Don Edwards of California and Tom Railsback and Harold Froelich, Republicans from Illinois and Wisconsin, respectively. All of them have been known as good government men. They have looked to the presidency, like many other progressives, as an agency for maintaining fairness and honesty.

As to the Eastern liberals, they have been the President-lovers par excellence. Since the New Deal days, the minorities of the big cities have looked to the Presidents as their special defenders.

But John Conyers, the black Democrat from Detroit, made a point of resting his vote against the President on a stand usually dear to Southerners — the prerogatives of the Congress. Hamilton Fish Jr., the scion of a distinguished New York Republican family, made a point of disavowing privilege for a ruling class. "The rule of law," he said, "applies equally to those who govern as well as to the governed."

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SO THE impeachment rests on a philosophic consensus. The effort of the White House to divide the Congress and the country has failed. It is fit that impeachment comes on the heels of unanimous Supreme Court decision to limit executive privilege. And the country now moves toward impeachment united as rarely before.