

Alistair Cooke Praises House Watergate Role

Washington

British-born broadcaster and narrator Alistair Cooke, in a speech to the House of Representatives, said yesterday the recent congressional impeachment proceedings had redeemed America's image abroad.

He said the House Judiciary Committee's approval of articles of impeachment against former President Nixon for Watergate-related offenses was like "a strong beam of light."

Cooke's speech was delivered at a ceremony marking the 200th anniversary of the first meeting of the U.S. Congress. It was beamed to audiences in Britain by the

British Broadcasting Corp.

In his speech Cooke said: "I think that any honest persons who are concerned for the reputation of this country abroad had much cause for misgiving in the past year or two, when our image was rendered alarming to free men by the gradual growth in the executive branch of government . . . of a kind of domestic politburo which in the end . . . was indifferent to the Congress, and contemptuous of the people and the law."

He declared: "But then through the gloom and squalor that lay on this city there came a strong beam of light, and it came from the south.

"Nothing that I can remember has redeemed, in Europe anyway, the best picture of America . . . more than the recent public sessions of your Judiciary Committee — We saw and heard 18 men and women debating with sense and dignity and seriousness the most dire threat to the constitutional system since 1860."

Cooke became a U.S. citizen in 1941. He is the creator of the special television series "America" which has won awards around the world. He has been a special correspondent for the BBC and for the Manchester Guardian.

Reuters