

I do not desire, however, in making this quotation, to be understood as adopting or approbating the sectional sentiments which are conveyed—far from it. I predicate my action upon no such dangerous basis. I am in favor of our claim to Oregon, so far as it is *just*, no farther. To *this* extent, I am for asserting and maintaining our claim, under all circumstances, and at all hazards—preferring peace always, but risking war rather than yield our soil.

Mr. Chairman, after the open and undisguised avowal to which I have alluded, that this Republic must acquire territory in order to preserve and perpetuate the institution of slavery, is it not time for us all to pause and think? Certainly it is time for the free States, and the *freemen* who inhabit those States, to lay aside all minor differences of opinion, and agree, at least in resisting these open encroachments upon the laws and Constitution. Let us have the courage to call for the constitutional power to make acquisitions for the object and purpose here avowed. For myself, sir, I most solemnly declare, that I am always ready to use what little of ability it has pleased the Almighty to bestow upon me in preserving the external and domestic peace of the nation, and in maintaining inviolate and sacred all the rights secured by the laws and Constitution to any State, or any individual in this Union; and I am equally ready to resist, and prevent, if possible, all attempts of any section or interest to encroach upon the Constitution and laws of the country, whether such attempt be made in order to “extend the area” of slavery, or for the purpose of giving preponderance to that institution in the counsels of this Confederacy.

NOTE.—This speech was delivered before the recent correspondence between the two Governments, on the subject of submitting the Oregon controversy to arbitration, was communicated to the House by the President.