

We are not, Mr. Chairman, the advocates of total inactivity on this subject. On the contrary, I believe the time has come when it is proper to adopt such measures as will promote the settlement of the Oregon territory, and give law and protection to our people there. But I do not believe the time has yet come for abrogating the convention of joint occupancy.

It has suited the views and purposes of gentlemen, to represent this policy of masterly inactivity as a South Carolina scheme; as though it was not adopted, as far back as 1818, by the united councils of the nation; as though, after an experience of ten years, it was not again established in 1827, by a unanimity almost unexampled; as though it was not adhered to throughout the twelve years of Andrew Jackson's Administration, and that of Mr. Van Buren; as though South Carolina were doing anything more than advising you not to disturb what so much wisdom and disinterested patriotism had devised and sanctioned, and what so long a period of time had proved to be beneficial. You, sir, and not we, are proposing innovations and new schemes of policy. You are advising to set at naught the councils that have endured throughout five Administrations;—the wisdom of which councils was, all the while, so self-evident and palpable, that the cunning selfishness of party, or the schemes of plotting ambition, never ventured to make a question about it; and I am at a loss to see what else ever could have made a question about it.

Let the committee follow me a moment, while I give a brief account of this matter. Gentlemen represent Great Britain as aiming to keep off, as long as possible, this question of notice; and ourselves, as the dupes of her temporizing policy, destined to be caught in some snare she has laid in the future, for us. I deny that this policy is of British origin. It is our own, both in its beginning and its continuation. The first conception of it we find, in the instructions given, in 1818, to Mr. Rush, at that time our Minister at the Court of St. James. It was the desire of Lord Castlereagh, the English Minister, that the conflicting claims of the two countries, in relation to the northwest territory, should be included among the subjects of negotiation, then pending at London, and be brought to a final adjustment. Mr. Rush sought instructions from his Government, and Mr. J. Q. Adams, then Secretary of State, in his instructions to Mr. Rush, for the first time, sets forth distinctly and most comprehensively the policy of "taking Oregon upon time." Alluding to some things proper to be mentioned by Mr. Rush to Castlereagh, in regard to this matter, Mr. Adams proceeds as follows:

"In suggesting these ideas to Lord Castlereagh, rather in conversation than any more formal manner, it may be proper to remark, the minuteness of the present interest, either to Great Britain or the United States, involved in this concern, and the unwillingness, for that reason, of this Government, to include it among the objects of serious discussion with them. At the same time you might give him to understand, though not unless in a manner to avoid everything offensive in the suggestion, that from the nature of things, if, in the course of future events, it (Oregon) should ever become an object of serious im-

portance to the United States, it can scarcely be supposed, that Great Britain would find it useful or advisable, to resist their claim, to possession, by systematic opposition."

He then adds, that Great Britain could have "no solid interest" to prevent the extension of territory "until all possibility of doing so, should have vanished."

Here, sir, is the first conception of the time that would best secure our rights in Oregon and by recurring to the language of our Secretary (Mr. Adams,) it might be inferred that he entertained some doubts, whether it would ever become an object of importance to the United States, to possess themselves of that country. But I add he spoke as a diplomatist.

Now, in 1818, Great Britain was in the exclusive and adverse possession of Oregon. And yet, high a value did our diplomatist set on the act of time, to fortify our rights, he desired to avoid all negotiations, and leave to Great Britain all advantage which exclusive and adverse possession would give her in future negotiations. He thought time worth more to us than exclusive, adverse possession to Great Britain. But fortunately species of convention was hit upon, which, while it did not conflict with our policy of procrastination, gave nothing to Great Britain, but in fact destroyed the adverse character of her possession, and prevented the legal effect of such a possession in future negotiations upon the title. And gentlemen tell you this convention was a scheme of Great Britain to advance her interest and undermine ours! I have said, Great Britain, in point of fact, took nothing by the convention. Her exclusive occupancy was a state of things persistent to the convention. We did not stipulate for the purpose of occupying, but, simply, occupancy, claimed by both parties, as a right prior to, and independent of, convention, should not be made a cause of quarrel. You will perceive, therefore, from what has been said and quoted, our diplomatist, so far from being disinclined to the convention, was, in fact, in the first instance, anxious to adopt a policy far less to our advantage, that is, to avoid all negotiations, and leave Great Britain in exclusive and adverse possession.

Such, sir, was the beginning of this policy, that masterly act of diplomacy; and who among great and patriotic men of the day disapproved it?

Well, sir, in 1827, the term of the convention of 1818 was about to expire, and negotiations were to be renewed: Was any new policy then recommended by the venerable gentleman from Massachusetts, then President of the United States? No, sir. Notwithstanding we had acquired the title to Spain, and, perhaps, supposed we had some reason to feel indignant, that Great Britain, under her new state of the question, should still dispute title with us, the stipulations of 1818 were renewed in 1828; and I have yet to learn that the people, not, with one voice, approve. What said Mr. Monroe, Gallatin, Crawford, Clay, Lowndes, Clinton, and Van Buren? What did Andrew Jackson say? At this time the second contest between Mr. Adams and General Jackson had reached its highest pitch of excitement. The whole political life of Mr. Adams was scrutinized with no feelings of indulgent charity. It was a favorite object of the opposing party to fix upon him an unfair

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