

Historical Note. Message might, and probably would, suggest some modifications of it. What these modifications might be, Mr. Buchanan said, had not yet been determined; but I imagine that they will not involve anything essentially hostile to the adoption of the proposed arrangement, or which may not be overcome by friendly negotiation and explanation between the two Governments.

1846.

"As relates to the Senate, my Lord, when we consider the moderate and conciliatory spirit in which the entire question of Oregon has been treated by a large majority of that body since the opening of the present Session of Congress, I think it may be fairly expected that their advice to the President on the reference which is about to be made to them will rather favour than impede an early and satisfactory termination of the Oregon difficulties.

"I should add that, in addition to what Mr. Buchanan said about the navigation of the Columbia, he gave it as his opinion that it would be necessary, and even advisable, with the view to avoid future misunderstanding, to define, or to provide for the early definition of, the limits of the farms and lands now in the occupation of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, and which it is proposed shall be confirmed to the Association in perpetuity. To such a proviso, if conceived in a spirit of liberality and fairness, I imagine that Her Majesty's Government will have no objection. But upon this point, as well as what relates to the navigation of the Columbia, I will act with due caution, and, to the best of my humble judgment and ability, in conformity with the spirit and intention of your Lordship's instructions, as set forth in your Lordship's despatch No. 19.

"I have, &c.

(Signed) "R. PAKENHAM."

On the 10th of June, the President of the United States sent this Message to the Senate:—

"I lay before the Senate a proposal, in the form of a Convention, presented to the Secretary of State on the 6th instant, by the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Her Britannic Majesty, for the adjustment of the Oregon question, together with a protocol of this proceeding. I submit this proposal to the consideration of the Senate, and request their advice as to the action which, in their judgment, it may be proper to take in reference to it.

"In the early periods of the Government, the opinion and advice of the Senate were often taken in advance upon important questions of our foreign policy. General Washington repeatedly consulted the Senate, and asked their previous advice upon pending negotiations with foreign Powers; and the Senate in every instance responded to this call by giving their advice, to which he always conformed his action. This practice, though rarely resorted to in latter times, was, in my judgment, eminently wise, and may, on occasions of great importance, be properly revived. The Senate are a branch of the Treaty-making Power; and by consulting them in advance of his own action upon important measures of foreign policy which may ultimately come before them for their consideration, the President secures harmony of action between that body and himself. The Senate are, moreover, a branch of the war-making Power, and it may be eminently proper for the Executive to take the opinion and advice of that body in advance upon any great question which may involve in its decision the issue of peace or war. On the present occasion, the magnitude of the subject would induce me under any circumstances to desire the previous advice of the Senate; and that desire is increased by the recent debates and proceedings in Congress, which render it, in my judgment, not only respectful to the Senate, but necessary and proper, if not indispensable, to insure harmonious action between that body and the Executive. In conferring on the Executive the authority to give the notice for the abrogation of the Convention of 1827, the Senate acted publicly so large a part, that a decision on the proposal now made by the British Government, without a definite knowledge of the views of that body in reference to it, might render the question still more complicated and difficult of adjustment. For these reasons I invite the consideration of the Senate to the proposal of the British Government for the settlement of the Oregon question, and ask their advice on the subject.

"My opinions and my action on the Oregon question were fully made known to Congress in my annual Message of the 2nd of December last; and the opinions therein expressed remain unchanged.

"Should the Senate, by the constitutional majority required for the ratification of Treaties, advise the acceptance of this proposition, or advise it with such modifications as they may, upon full deliberation, deem proper, I shall conform my action to their advice. Should the Senate, however, decline by such constitutional majority to give such advice, or to express an opinion on the subject, I shall consider it my duty to reject the offer.

"I also communicate herewith an extract from a despatch of the Secretary of State to the Minister of the United States at London, under date of the 28th of April last, directing him, in accordance with the joint resolution of Congress 'concerning the Oregon Territory,' to deliver the notice to the British Government for the abrogation of the Convention of the 6th of August, 1827; and also a copy of the notice transmitted to him for that purpose, together with extracts from a despatch of that Minister to the Secretary of State, bearing date on the 18th day of May last.

(Signed)

"JAMES K. POLK."

"Washington, June 10, 1846."

On the same day the President's Message was considered, and a motion that the Message and documents communicated therewith be referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations was negatived, as was also a motion to postpone the further consideration thereof until 15th June.

On the two next following days the consideration of the Message was continued, and an amendment proposing the addition of a proviso to Article II was moved;* but