

OCCUPATION OF OREGON.

SPEECH

OF

MR. OWEN, OF INDIANA,

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES,

JANUARY 23 AND 24, 1844.

On the question of the joint occupancy by Great Britain with the United States, of the Territory of Oregon.

On the 4th January, 1844, Mr. OWEN introduced a joint resolution, requesting the President of the United States to give notice of twelve months to the Government of Great Britain, in conformity with the provision of an existing treaty, that, from and after the expiration of that term, the occupation of Oregon by Great Britain, conjointly with the United States, should cease. The joint resolution was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and that committee reported it back on January 23, accompanied by a resolution, to the effect, that "it is inexpedient for Congress, at this time, to act in any manner upon the subject." The question being on the adoption of that resolution—

Mr. OWEN said: I am aware of the effect which the adverse report just made from a committee of a character so high as that on foreign affairs, in regard to the joint resolution which I submitted to this House, is likely to produce. I regret it. I do not understand the committee, however, as expressing an opinion that the resolution should not pass at all; but only, that, for the present, it should be delayed. They are disposed, we may presume, to await the action of time and of certain expected contingencies, before they adopt this measure. I differ from them in regard to the expediency of delay. I think we ought to act now. The views of those who hold to the opposite opinion are entitled to much consideration; I shall always receive their opinions with respect, and examine them with attention; yet, with the lights now before me, I must adhere to my own.

He is but a hot-headed politician, who seeks to urge on a favorite measure that may be just in itself, rashly, prematurely, in a hasty manner, at an improper time. But there is such a thing as temporizing weakness, as well as rashness. To put off the evil day, is bad policy, in public as in private affairs. That which is surely impending—that which we must meet to-day or to-morrow, self-respect and wisdom bid us meet to-day.

If these be correct views, let us inquire how far they apply to the subject before us. The effect of the joint resolution in question, and which a majority of the committee recommend to postpone, is, to terminate a treaty or