

tional matters, that it could only confer and consult. I do not know that any very definite action was taken upon this occasion. The conference of 1907 was perhaps a more important event. Prior to the conference of 1907 there had been circulated among the overseas dominions a definite proposal looking to the establishment of an imperial council sitting at the capital of the empire, on which council there were to be representatives of all the overseas dominions. When the conference met in 1907, Sir Wilfrid Laurier again represented Canada, and he took objection at once to the term "Colonial Council", or "Imperial Council". He said the very word "council" implied more than he was at liberty to do. He did not object to a conference; he was quite willing to confer, to advise or to consult, but he would have nothing to do with a council or a cabinet, and his views were unanimously endorsed. He agreed, however, that a body might be formed to be known as an imperial conference, and a motion was carried in that year that in the future the conference should be called an Imperial conference instead of a Colonial conference and should be a conference not between the self-governing dominions and the Colonial Office but between the governments of the self-governing dominions and the British government, government with government, and the conference of 1911 was held in London under these conditions.

The conference of 1911 was an Imperial conference, the first conference of government with government, and at that conference certain very important matters were discussed, and some were settled. In the report of the conference of 1911 I think the most outstanding feature is the persistence and insistence with which all the representatives of the overseas dominions laid their case before the conference, claiming the fullest rights of self-government; full and absolute autonomy; the right to negotiate and make treaties; the right to do their own business without regard to anyone else, and that position was fully accepted by the conference. At that time, however, a further question arose which is well worth notice; matters of foreign policy were formally discussed in 1911 for the first time. Premier Hughes of Australia brought forward the question of the Declaration of London which, as you know, was the result of a treaty passed by the Peace Tribunal at the Hague, but which did not come into force until ratified by the various governments. Great Britain ratified the Declaration of London without consulting the overseas dominions, to the great annoyance of Aus-

[Mr. Guthrie.]

tralia and Premier Hughes brought that matter to the attention of the conference by way of a direct motion. Sir Edward Grey at that time represented Great Britain as Foreign Secretary, and the discussion which took place between Sir Edward Grey, Premier Hughes and others on that occasion is most illuminating. I do not know that I have time to read it all, but I am going to read just one or two remarks made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, representing Canada. On that occasion he stated that for many years Canada had enjoyed full powers in regard to treaty making, but he pointed out that there were two kinds of treaties, commercial treaty and treaty of amity, or treaties which some day might involve questions of war or of peace. He argued that Canada had at all times maintained her right to negotiate and make her own treaties. It was true that the British ambassador at Washington and the British ambassador at Paris had been formal parties to the negotiations, but they had allowed Canada to conduct the actual negotiations, and the ambassador had only been called in when the question of ratification arose. But in regard to other treaties, those having regard to foreign policy, the following words will be found at page 116 of the reports of Imperial Conferences:

Coming now to the other class of treaties, which I characterized as treaties of amity, it would seem to me that it would be fettering, in many instances, the home government—the imperial authorities—very seriously, if any of the outside dominions were to be consulted as to what they should do on a particular question. In many cases the nature of the treaty would be such that it would only interest one of the dominions. If it interested them all, the Imperial authorities would find themselves seriously embarrassed if they were to receive the advice of Australia in one way, the advice of New Zealand in another way, and the advice of Canada, perhaps, in a third way.

Then on page 117:

This is a thing which, in my humble judgment, ought to be left altogether to the responsibility of the government of the United Kingdom, for this reason: This is a treaty which lays down certain rules of war as to in what manner war is to be carried on by the great powers of Europe. In my humble judgment if you undertake to be consulted and to lay down a wish that your advice should be pursued as to the manner in which the war is to be carried on, it implies, of necessity, that you should take part in that war. How are you to give advice and to insist upon the manner in which war is to be carried on, unless you are prepared to take the responsibility of going into the war?

Mr. Fisher: Do not we do that in a manner by coming here?

That is Mr. Fisher of Australia.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier: No, we come here to discuss certain questions; but there are ques-