

1 June, 1911.]

DECLARATION OF LONDON.

[3rd Day.

Sir EDWARD GREY—*cont.*

I do not think that is a possible interpretation of the Declaration of London as it stands; but anyhow, under the Declaration of London, no Power could treat Liverpool or Bristol, say, as a base of supplies for the enemy, unless we had made an actual camp there, without really violating the definition of "base of supplies" as given in the Declaration of London.

Mr. FISHER: Is that admitted by others?

Sir EDWARD GREY: I think it would be felt by everybody who signed the Declaration of London, that if one Power did that, it would be a violation of the Declaration of London; but even supposing that extreme case occurred, at present a belligerent with whom we are at war need not trouble to declare anything as a base of supplies as regards food, but could simply say all food is contraband of war. So even admitting that extreme case, we are still no worse off than we were before. That is what I meant when I said even though these terms are vague they are not displacing terms more definite than those that are coming in, and if they do not occupy the ground very completely, they at any rate occupy ground on which there was nothing at all before to interfere with an enemy.

Now I will come to the final point—as to consultation.

Mr. BATCHELOR: Before leaving the minor points, it would be gratifying for us to hear an expression of opinion from you as to whether there is the least reasonable probability of agreement being come to with regard to conversion of merchantmen. That is a matter which concerns us very much.

Sir EDWARD GREY: It was tried, and it failed. No agreement could be come to, and we remain there just as we were. We have not got our way over that, and the Declaration of London does not affect it; but if, as we consider, we gain certain advantages under the Declaration of London as it stands, that is no reason why we should withdraw from it because we have not got all we wanted.

The PRESIDENT: Who were the main opponents of our view? Who made it impossible to come to an agreement?

Sir EDWARD GREY: Germany was the chief opponent, and we were in a small minority.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Is there a definition of what is a "base," or is it left to general interpretation?

Sir EDWARD GREY: There is no definition. The word "base" is the only definition.

Dr. FINDLAY: Surely it has a definite enough meaning in an International Prize Court. It has been defined more than once by our courts and by other courts.

Sir EDWARD GREY: Yes. "Base" in itself is a definition. I think anybody would hold that it is monstrous to say that a purely mercantile port, simply because a line of railway goes from it to some place 100 miles off where there is an armed camp, is a base. Base is something the main purpose of which is to serve the enemy's forces.

Dr. FINDLAY: There would be no doubt as to what it means in my country, I know.