

ARE we to have the elections this autumn? A lot of people seem to think so, though there is a good deal of initial objection to be got out of the way. This is only the third year of the present Parliament; and four years has been the favourite term in the past. This enables the Government to dally with the hopes and fears of the Opposition as to whether or not the blow is really to fall; and at the same time gives the members a maximum amount of sessional indemnity for a minimum of election expenses. When Parliament lives out its full life of five years, then the Opposition is as wise as the Government over the certainty of elections; and the ministers are cheated out of their legitimate pleasure in keeping the enemy "guessing." But to dissolve Parliament after only three sessions will have to be explained very clearly to "the boys" who could use that other \$2,500 in their business. Some may be depending upon it to "make their elections"—as they say in Quebec—and may otherwise be faced with the necessity of "making them with prayers."

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However, this latter objection can be disposed of by a Government which has good reasons for an early dissolution. There are such things as "campaign funds," though it is always difficult for the courts to discover anybody who knows much about them. Before polling day they are much more easily "located." Men of even very ordinary intelligence are then able to get in touch with them—sometimes with both of them at the same election. Thus members of Parliament who have spent their sessional indemnities as they went along, may not be driven to the hard necessity of depending upon religious exercises for political success. But the Government will not undertake this costly forced march unless there is a reason for it. They are even capable of demanding that the "reason" make up the gaps in the campaign fund. Now is there such a "reason" in sight which would be likely to subscribe a small sum for "promotion expenses" of a "perfectly legitimate character"?

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Have you noticed anything in the papers about an "All Red Line"? I have seen an item or two myself. Connected with it are such names as Lord Strathcona and Clifford Sifton—gentlemen who are generally associated with enterprises that are able to pay car-fare. This enterprise looks as if it might even ride in the Pullman and "tip" the porter. It talks big money. It proposes to levy upon several very rich and very generous Governments for subsidies. But John Bull is looking at it with something resembling a cautious air. Lloyd-George gave it a sort of faint smile of sympathetic interest; and immediately found himself in hot water with some of his followers in the British Commons. They have now appointed a Cabinet Committee over there to examine the whole question; and there is a visible fear on the faces of John Bull's Ministers just now that the pushful Colonies may be trying to pull the old gentleman's leg. Possibly they are asking Sir Wilfrid, and his associates in this magnificent Imperial enterprise, whether they are quite certain that the Canadian people will put up their share of the subsidy.

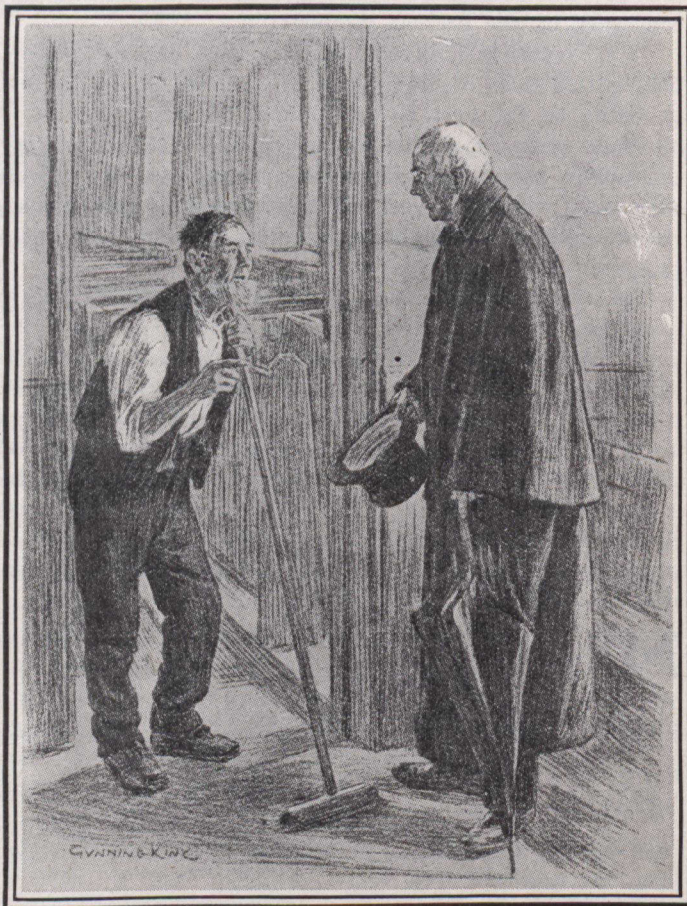
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Now, if that were so, what could be more "pat" than

that Sir Wilfrid should come sailing home with his splendid scheme for making of Canada the Bridge of the Empire, joining that British lake—the Atlantic—with that Australian sea—the Pacific, and then should ask the Canadian people to declare at the polls by a vote of confidence in himself and his Government that they are willing to put up the Bridge? That would be excuse enough for holding an election this year—a very much more plausible excuse than Sir John Macdonald's in 1891 when he appealed to the people to give him a mandate to go down to Washington to negotiate a reciprocity treaty. What he really meant was to go down to Washington and fail to negotiate such a treaty. Pretexts for elections need not be very convincing. In this case, however, would it be a "pretext"? Is the Government thinking of using the "All Red" scheme as a convenient elevator to another five years' lease of power; or is it the "All Red" scheme which is trying to compel the Government to secure for it the endorsement of the Canadian people at the polls?

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Among the initial objections which must be got out of the way, I quite forgot to mention the rumoured pledge to the Opposition that they would be given another "round" before the Government would call for a "decision." It has always seemed improbable to me that there ever was such a pledge. In fact, a definite guarantee on the part of the Government that they would not dissolve Parliament until after another session of Parliament would approach very near to the unconstitutional. One of the advantages of our system of government is the right of an instantaneous appeal to the people at any crisis; and how could the Premier know on the eve of his departure to attend a great Imperial Conference in London that some question—possibly of Imperial interest—might not arise which would necessitate an immediate consultation of the Canadian people? If he gave such a pledge, the day before an Imperial Conference was an exceedingly bad time to select for the giving of it. But it is far more likely that, if anything were given, it was an intimation and not a pledge; and the intimation was probably well dotted with "ifs." Still "Whip" Calvert talks about a pledge in robust tones. Can it be that he gave the pledge and has a sort of old-fashioned desire to see his personal pledges honoured? At any rate, I shall not believe that there is a definite pledge in the way until Mr. Borden produces it.



Minister (on return from holiday). "Well, Daniel, my good man, and how have things been going in my absence?"
Daniel. "Deed, Sir, a' things been gaun on brawly. They say that you Meenisters, when ye gang frae hame, aye tak' guid care to send waur men than yoursels to fill the poopit. But ye never dae that, Sir!"—Punch.