

## Comment by the Editor

### *THE TALENT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT*

Deep in the heart of every man is a sense of his own consequence. All men are born important. Children are by nature individualists. No matter how blurred the feeling of personal significance may become in the adversities of life, it is inherent still. Submerged beneath accumulated frustration, or controlled by the exigencies of social discipline, the egotistic character of personality survives. Complete freedom of expression may be denied, but the natural desire for independent conduct smolders in the breast of the most humble citizen. In a negative way this individualism is akin to the instinct of self-preservation. Positively it culminates in self-government.

Government requires more than individual self-control: personal discipline must be amalgamated into social righteousness. He who can govern himself must also deal justly with others. The competent ruler is guided by knowledge, persuaded by reason, and strives to promote the common good. Nothing is more difficult. And yet people attempt to govern themselves. Their



audacity, springing from the egoism in human nature, dares to administer the altruism of social welfare.

Between the aspiration for autonomy and the just administration of public affairs, however, lies a wide gulf of experience. The processes of self-government are no more automatic than the skill of artistic expression. Even a bird must learn to fly. Ambition alone does not produce mastery. Given the innate predilection, the ultimate achievement of autonomy can be attained only through extensive opportunity for individual initiative, self-reliance, and social responsibility. When a people can fulfill such qualifications they are capable of self-government.

To an amazing degree the pioneers of Iowa assumed the power and accepted the responsibility of governing themselves. The demonstration of their competence is revealed in the endurance of the political institutions they established.

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