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QUALITIES FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT

It is said, with truth, that knowledge and experience as well as intelligence are needed to fit a people for free self-government. But a still graver defect than the want of experience is the want of the desire for self-government in the mass of the nation. When a people allow an old-established government like that of the Tsars or the Manchus to be overthrown, it is because they resent its oppressions or despise its incompetence. But this does not mean that they wish to govern themselves. As a rule, *that which the mass of any people desires is not to govern itself but to be well governed.* So when free institutions are forced on a people who have not spontaneously called for them, they come as something not only unfamiliar but artificial. They do not naturally and promptly engage popular interest and sympathy but are regarded with an indifference which lets them fall into the hands of those who seek to use the machinery of government for their own purposes. It is as if one should set a child to drive a motor car. Wherever self-government has worked well, it is because men have fought for it and valued it as a thing they had won for themselves, feeling it to be the true remedy for misgovernment...

A population of a bold and self-reliant character is more fitted to work free institutions than is one long accustomed to passive and unreasoning obedience...

— James Bryce in *Modern Democracies.*