

a world where natural opportunities are free to all men. Abolish all special privilege, and the man of high abilities would earn his greater compensation as the just reward of benefits imparted to the whole body of society.

Under such conditions all society, including the humblest servitor, would rise in affluence in proportion to the increase in productivity. Which is to say that if our productivity should increase as fast in the next 40 years as it has in the last 40, the poorest class would be ten times as affluent as now, plus its hitherto withheld equity in the current product of to-day.

To-day, the difference between the extremes of income measures the difference between the opportunities of individuals. Abolish all forms of special privilege, and the difference between the extremes of income would measure the difference in the social service of the individual recipients, and the maximum income would be the just reward of the largest contributor to the sum of human welfare.

EDWARD HOWELL PUTNAM.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

MUNICIPAL OPERATION IN NEW YORK.

New York, Oct. 10.—The inauguration of the municipal ferry between Manhattan and Richmond boroughs—that is, from New York city proper to Staten Island—which has been announced for the 25th of this month, is an event most interesting and significant in the progress toward public control of public utilities. It is not quite correct to speak of this as New York's first essay in municipal operation of transportation facilities, since for a number of years the railway on the Brooklyn bridge was so operated; and, incidentally, gave far more satisfactory service than since it has been turned over to the trolley corporations. But this is the first experiment in New York of the city in managing a means of transport essentially complete in itself.

For many years the facilities for reaching Staten Island have been inadequate in the extreme; and as a result, the progress of the island has been retarded, although the nearest of all the suburbs to the great business centers, and nearer to the financial heart of Wall street than any place even in the city proper, where a family could live at less than \$1,200 a year rental, unless they lived in a tenement house. The ferry service of about five miles was maintained with

comparative freedom from accident, and with rather extraordinary regularity, but grew steadily slower and less and less comfortable as time went on. Demands for improvement, however angry, were met by the ferry company, of which the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, notorious for its penuriousness, was chief owner, with the reply that unless they were granted a practically unlimited franchise, they could not afford to give any improvement.

The steady insistence of this assertion was telling on public sentiment, and if the acute stage had been reached a few years earlier, the result would probably have been the same as with the establishment of a traction system throughout the more thickly settled part of the island about a dozen years ago. Then a feeble cry was set up for municipal ownership (or, rather, ownership by the county, since it had not been absorbed by the city at the time), but public sentiment was not ripe, and two private corporations were allowed to monopolize the franchises under conditions of most flagrant corruption, whereby such an excessive capitalization was distributed in the way of bribes among the various town and village officials, that although the lines have had a tremendous traffic, they have been losing enterprises from the start.

Meanwhile the ferry service was steadily growing more and more unbearable; the boats were becoming absolutely unsafe, and the company obstinately refusing to take any steps toward procuring better ones, when the Low administration came into power—the island having then been "consolidated" as part of the city—and the single tax element, which really furnished the chief vital leaven of the Low movement, began to instill its virus at once into official life and public thought. Neither Mayor Low nor his most influential advisers probably ever knew how much they were indebted for their ideas to the energetic band of single taxers who formed so active a part of their following, although sedulously kept in the background so far as positions of authority were concerned. But the leaven worked and seethed, until the administration, distracted by a fierce conflict for control of the ferry franchise, renewal of which was under discussion, finally declared in favor of taking it over by the city itself.

Then followed a long period of incompetent scheming, which lasted nearly a year, and culminated just as Mayor Low was defeated for reelection, in plans which were totally impracticable, and had to be set aside by the new Tammany administration. Coming on the scene with the city definitely committed to the principle of municipal ownership, these men, who would almost certainly have never thought it

out for themselves, promptly accepted the situation, took it up in a businesslike way, put under construction a fleet of boats, the finest in the harbor, and went ahead with reconstruction of the entire plant on a basis which is admittedly better than anything that even the great railroad ferries have ever furnished for public convenience. Partly as a result of the personal influence exerted by a considerable body of men to retain their jobs, a bill was passed to give first preference for employment to the staff which had been operating the ferry, and thus quite innocently a reply was made in advance to the common objection that the city would sacrifice efficiency of employes to political considerations, because precisely the same men were to be employed that the presumably strong incentive of private interest had previously engaged.

As we are just at the threshold of the experiment, its detailed results cannot yet be predicted; though it is beginning to dawn on people that the city, even with its limited system of taxing land values, can better afford than any private owner, to operate a means of transit without direct profit for sake of the incidental benefits in building up the suburb. There are those who still prophesy disaster, chiefly among the class which, of very moderate means itself, delights in aping the rich; but by the great majority it has come to be accepted as a matter of course that this is the right way for a ferry to be run, and the enthusiastic salute which the harbor craft have given the boats whenever they have appeared, is significant of the sentiment of the masses. Most valuable of all, however, is perhaps the illustration given of how reforms of the sort come about, to cheer earnest men who sometimes lose heart because an agitation seems to make so little ground along the lines that it is first projected. We reap not where we sow, and those who have been preaching for so many years that we should render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, that the people should retain for themselves what is naturally their own property—whether it be land values or franchises—have had no direct hand whatever in this most important step in the direction at which they aimed. But their ideas have been bearing fruit in all sorts of unexpected places.

E. J. SHRIVER.

It does not, we admit, necessarily signify a satisfactory economic state to show that 88 per cent. of the Negro males over ten years of age in the 11 largest cities of the North are engaged in gainful occupations, in comparison with the 83 per cent. of all males of the same age, but it suffices to dispose of the charge that as a race they are idlers.—New York Nation.