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EDITORIAL

LOCAL BRANON, S.P.

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THERE is somewhere in the desert part of Texas a down-and-out spot marked by a down-and-out cotton gin and a few huts to match. The spot is called Branon. Tho' with a population that is problematic, Branon is just now filling a large space in the Socialist party. In Branon is located one of those S.P. Locals that is a type of many others.

Drawing conclusions from the facts now hysterically furnished by the *S.P. Bulletin*, and even making allowance for the hysterics, "Local Branon" partakes of the qualities of the bank that Artemus Ward describes, upon which a cheque was drawn, but was found "never to have had an existence, but quite otherwise and to the contrary." It has not the requisite minimum for membership, except to the extent that some "member" once paid the dues for others; it does not meet; and it decides according as one or other individual thinks is the "general understanding."

In so far as these are the features of "Local Branon, S.P.," the features are not peculiar to the physiognomy of that particular "Local, S.P." They are features common to the physiognomy of an abundance of "S.P. Locals"—a non-existent membership, except as figured out in cash receipts of dues, with some local bosslet to run the concern. It is just the structure that one could guess in advance must be the structure of "Locals" gotten up, and a "membership" scraped together, by "organizers" who must "make good."

All this being so "Local Branon, S.P." would not be entitled to mention in these columns were it not for certain additional circumstances that the "Local" is the center of.

The rumpus that has been started by a referendum which "Local Branon" initiated, and which gets under the hide of the Barnes-Hillquit-Hunter set of the S.P.'s Officialdom-and-Press, unearths the fact "Local Branon" is a product and pliant tool

of Thomas Aloysius Hickey. Who may the gentleman be? The answer to the question deserves a place in the history of the American Movement, in that the facts help to explain the debauching effect the Officialdom-and-Press of the S.P. exercises upon the Movement.

That rival organizations should endeavor to get one another's members is legitimate—that is proselyting—that is the consequence of propaganda. The Socialist Labor Party does it, and not a few are the members of other parties whom the S.L.P. rescued, and now numbers in its camp, and is proud of. That is one thing; another thing, however, is for a rival party to render itself an asylum for the skip-jacks of other parties. To accept such tainted material is to fan the embers of corruption. Such conduct, of course, eventually if not sooner, brings its own punishment. In the meantime, however, its pestilential effect becomes general. These are principles that the “Local Branon,” alias the Thomas Aloysius Hickey case, brings into prominence.

Hickey was a member of the Socialist Labor Party. He is gifted with that fatal Brightness that stands in its own way. It breeds a Shallowness which the Brightness renders noisy, and which the owner thereof is the first to be victimized by. He takes it as a substitute for Knowledge—and starts on his peculiar career. Of course, Dishonesty, if not twin sister to the Brightness, is its eldest child. Not infrequently Drunkenness joins. Thus with Hickey. He was in the employ of *The People*. But do what one may, the cancer, spread by the brood of Brightness, Shallowness and Dishonesty, re-inforced with Drunkenness, carried the day. Hickey became incorrigible. He shirked work, drank to excess, lied, and was found excessively unreliable in money matters. He had to be discharged from this office, and speedily thereafter was expelled from Section New York, Socialist Labor Party, for conduct that had become notoriously disreputable.

This notoriously tainted subject was no sooner secreted by and out of the S.L.P. when he was received by the S.P. with open arms—and with kisses. Kisses? Is not this a joke? No. It is not a joke. He was actually kissed in the S.P., where he has ever since thrived—and spread his instincts, till now the stench, ripened into the “Local Branon” affair, is entered on the scrolls of the history of the Socialist Movement of the land as an evidence of the debauching effect of the S.P. upon the Ameri-

can Movement, and as an evidence that asylum granted to Dishonor is like biting off your own nose to spite others.

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