

# He Impressed Hillary: "Clear It With Sidney"

The courtier, spaniel, and excited purveyor of what "someone" told him is the comical Sidney Blumenthal. [But enough about him.](#)

The original Sidney of the Republican charge that a powerful Washington figure had always to "clear it with Sidney" was Sid or Sidney Hillman, the leader of the ILGWU (International Ladies' Garment Union), and the powerful figure was Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Sid Hillman was a great figure in the labor movement. Try to recall the names of the others, and do it right now. Before Hillman, with whom FDR supposedly had to "clear" so much, there was Samuel Gompers, the founder of the American labor movement. And after Hillman at the ILGWU, there was David Dubinsky. And there was Walter Reuther, taking blows from union-busters at the Red River plant. And George Meany, of the Carpenters' Union. And then Reuther and Meany together represented and exemplified the union movement, until they died, and then it was Lane Kirkland, the courtly South Carolinian and thus, for some, an unlikely successor but a good one.

Now let's see. Can you name, right off the bat, the leader of any major union in the United States? You can't? Now, why is that? Answer that question properly, and you will share Bernie Sanders' and Elizabeth Warren's mistrust of the latest trade agreement, because all the union leaders who count are in places like China and Bangladesh and that means they don't exist.