

Introduction

How strange to me, seeing these pieces with the name "Sidney Lens." To all of us in the movement—labor, peace, civil rights—he was blunt as Chicago, sometimes rude as a taxi driver, but always, no matter which side of the fight we were on at a given moment, he was Sid, prolific writer, tireless speaker, a man possessed of a strong ego, strong ideas, the fury and anger of the prophet.

*Much of Sid was a product of time and place, of a certain kind of labor movement which doesn't exist today. One feels his pain in the essay "Hold That Line," when a young peace activist crossed a picket line, leaving him behind. (Yet while Sid may have been left behind at that point by a younger generation, he was on the correct side of the line and it was the peace activist who would eventually have to run to catch up.) One finds this sense of "date" in the chapter from *The Crisis of American Labor* when he writes of hourly wages of \$3.50 an hour as being very good. I looked for the copyright date—1959—and yes, \$3.50 an hour was pretty good then and how far away that seems! How much farther away, then, was the period in which Sid's basic experiences took place—the 1930s, when he was on the front line of the struggle to organize labor.*