Roy Bergengren

This activity is geared to achieve the following objectives:

- Learn about the credit union heroes who shaped the industry.
- Connect the personal and professional motives of these heroes to your own credit union career.
- Share what you learn about your credit union hero with the large group in a 2-3 minute presentation.

When sharing this story, your table group is encouraged to reflect on the following:

1. Who was this person, and what were their key achievements in credit unions?
2. What motivated them to action?
3. What's their superpower?
4. How does this Hero's story connect to the larger credit union purpose of helping the financial fortunes of poor and working people?



ROY BERGENGREN

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A lawyer by training, he established a poverty law firm in the early 1900s.
- Drawn to credit union work because he felt his legal practice was not having a large enough impact.
- Founded with Edward Filene the Credit Union National Extension Bureau in 1921. CUNEB was later reorganized into the Credit Union National Association - CUNA.
- Served as the editor of the *Bridge,* an early communications tool of the credit union movement, when it was formed in 1924.
- A key proponent of a federal credit union statute since it would provide people throughout the US an opportunity to organize credit unions. Also worked to help 26 states pass credit union laws prior to enactment of the Credit Union Act in 1934 during the Roosevelt Administration.

- Named managing director of CUNA in 1937 with 6,400 credit unions serving over 1.5 million Americans
- Keen on international credit union development later in his career, he lobbied CUNA to start what is today the World Council of Credit Unions.

PERSONAL STORY #1

In 1920, Edward Filene hired Roy Bergengren to head the Massachusetts Credit Union Association. Later Bergie, as his friends called him, promoted the development of credit unions. By the end of 1921, Bergie had helped organize 19 credit unions in Massachusetts. During 1921, Edward Filene and Bergengren had founded the Credit Union National Extension Bureau with the purpose to establish credit union laws in all states and at a federal level.

PERSONAL STORY #2

Bergengren and Filene's enjoyed a successful working partnership in the early years of the movement, and this helped the movement thrive. However, the two did not always agree on the direction or choices that should be pursued. One example is during the Great Depression, when Filene suggested the government pump $100 million in reconstruction credits into credit unions to help re-build the American economy. Bergengren strongly disagreed, arguing that a vital principle of the movement would have been destroyed by transforming a community enterprise into a wing of the government. He also felt that teaching people to help themselves was most important in times like the Depression, and that credit unions were an important vehicle for achieving that purpose. Ultimately, Bergengren's opinion won the day.

PERSONAL STORY #3

In 1954, Bergengren became interested in international credit unions and convinced the CUNA directors to establish a world extension bureau. This international unit in known today as The World Council of Credit Unions.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

- Born June 14, 1897 in Gloucester, Massachusetts and better known as "Bergie."

- "(Bergengren) wanted to make the paycheck of those who worked for a living more efficient, and he believed everyone who worked ought to be able to save money. He knew average people would not have an effective savings account unless they could save regularly in small amounts and without embarrassment. He thought that when the members owned their savings, they ought to be able to use savings to meet their own legitimate credit needs." – Louise Herring, remarking on Bergengren's credit union motivations.

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