

Give them data and they will come

The title of the article was stated by Jon Hronsky, principal of Western Mining Services, who spoke on the future of exploration at the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC). This is not dissimilar to what the author has been stating for quite sometime.

He then went on to say that many jurisdictions are in danger of being left behind because their geology is hidden under cover and poorly understood.

Or, they may have the necessary data, but keep it to themselves (why would they do this)?

"Some governments want to ensure cost recovery on their spending, but that defeats the strategic purpose: to encourage investment and reduce the barriers to entry.

"Providing geoscience data is one of the best investments a government can make in terms of return on investment."

Was he talking about Indonesia? No he was not, but he may as well have been!

I was given a book to read recently called *Horizon Beyond* written in 1995 by the respected Julius Tahija who was the first Indonesian to hold the position of chairman of Caltex Pacific Indonesia (CPI), he made the following statement:

"Nature usually offers symmetry. Resources in the ground will follow a pattern just like the rings of a tree. You must stand back far enough to see this symmetry, and then try to make judgments that are as much art as science.

"Discovery is far from an end in itself. Experts must determine how much exists, what resources are present, and how much it would cost to extract them.

"Innovative technology can be



George Barber
JAKARTA

successfully applied to a primitive environment where science and the human spirit can solve complex problems."

Two people giving the same message albeit 21 years apart.

Tim Dobush, CEO of Geosoft, stated that using technology wisely can be part of the solution. We should be asking: Can we collect more reliable data before we put the first drill hole in the ground?

With the right geological insights and software technologies, we can reduce the cost, time and risk of exploration.

The technical capabilities required for future exploration will differ from traditional techniques and the tools and skills companies have at hand will need to align with the type of deposits they seek.

Geologists, geoscientists, people in different areas of exploration should not be thinking, "If we use new technology we will not have a job" how wrong can this way of thinking be? In my opinion, totally misconstrued, it can only lead to more work.

How much exploration is happening at this time? Not a lot, why? Is it because of the price of commodities on the market at this time? It appears to be.

Exploration with traditional tools is expensive, therefore companies are not exploring, which of course is short sighted, which in turn means that geologists, geoscientists etc., are not working at this time.

Would it not be better to utilize technology that has been developed by geologists, geoscientists and advocated by people such as has those mentioned in this article?

Would it not be better to look where and what you are looking for instead of looking for an unknown? Would it be better to go to defined areas that have a high probability of containing resources instead of chopping down large swathes of trees or ploughing up and down the oceans looking for something that may or may not be present?

Resource exploration is entering a new era where smarter use of technology, and better collaboration among geoscientists from the public and private sectors is a must.

The availability of data is imperative, if Indonesia does not start investing in it's self, there will not be any interest from International or local investors.

I asked the following question to the person who gave me the *Horizon Beyond* book, "do you think that it is easier to work in Indonesia than it was when CPI started here?" the reason I asked this question was simple, on reading the book, CPI had horrendous hurdles to cross. But the reply was, "No, it is even harder." Indonesia true to its self has made things harder, not easier.

How does science move? It moves like this, research & development, research & development, nobody believes, research & development and then everybody believes. This is what has happened with exploration throughout the ages.

It took many years for seismic to be accepted in the industry, now everyone uses it, although many users know that it has shortfalls, it is expensive to use, and it takes a long-time to cover a small area.

The research and development for innovative exploration technology has gone through the same scenario for the past 30 years, the people that have been mentioned in this article are believing, senior geologists and geoscientists are starting to believe based on facts and seeing.

As the well-known saying goes "seeing is believing". Several people in Indonesia are starting to believe that they need to do something differently.

It has been mentioned that Indonesia may become the world's sixth largest economy, companies like Pertamina and MEDCO as well as many others will then want to increase or invest in other countries, but to do this, Indonesia needs to accept international investors into their own country and not look at them as people who are trying to rob the country, this is short sightedness.

Analyst Keith Loveard stated, "In the past foreigners did well, because very few Indonesians wanted to play a role."

Now is the time for Indonesians to play a role in their own country, where either the government or the private sector invests in exploration, instead of offering tenders for oil, gas and geothermal development with very little or no data and getting very little interest (if any), it would be far better to offer tenders with data and then they will come, the tender price could then be much higher.

By having data they will come, it becomes an investment for the country.

The writer, a hydrographic surveyor by background, worked in the Royal Navy for 24 years and has been involved in projects in Indonesia for the past 22 years.