

CORRESPONDENCE

(1)

EROSION OF VALUES

(The following represents the view of a senior Earth Scientist who has retired from the Geological Survey of India—Ed.)

I feel immensely grateful to Dr. B. P. Radhakrishna for coming out with such thoughtful comments on the manner in which the Directors General of the Geological Survey of India have been appointed in recent years (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, Vol. 42, November, 1993, pp. 431-432). Having held this post during 1990-91, and having been with the Survey for more than 36 years, I know why the situation has come to such a pass today. In his comments, Dr. Radhakrishna has indeed conveyed what all right thinking earth scientists of the country feel today.

It is now abundantly evident that the Ministry of Mines has been finally able to subjugate the Survey fully, and is treating it like a small sub-ordinate office, and not as a great scientific organisation of national importance. The Ministry has taken advantage of the Survey's own internal weaknesses. The Survey's stock of outstanding scientists with vision is much depleted today. It can no longer boast of men of renown and eminence, who could only keep New Delhi away. Scholarship is the only real asset of any scientist. Those who are well-endowed in this respect always command respect. Those without, patronise mediocrity, and ruin the organisation. Dr. Radhakrishna has very rightly pointed out that only earth-scientists could lead the Survey. Others just cannot have the intellectual competence to command and inspire. Indeed there are still some good minds in the organisation, but most of these slowly wither in the prevailing environment of mediocrity and routine.

According to Dr. Radhakrishna, short tenure is perhaps the main reason for the apparent aimless performance of the Survey under successive Directors General. He recommends a minimum tenure of three years. During the last decade, however, there were at least two Directors General, who held the office for four years or more. To me, therefore, competence in earth scientists should be the main criterion of selection of the head of the organisation. Long tenure will provide additional advantage.

The Geological Survey is the only national organisation for survey and exploration of the non-living resources of the country. Excellence of its performance is, therefore, a matter of national concern. The people's representatives will make a grave mistake if they treat the problems of this organisation casually or come up with short-sighted measures. The situation demands radical measures, and the person or persons who can initiate them would certainly earn the gratitude of posterity.

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(2)

WHAT IS THE RATIONALE IN WITHHOLDING GEOLOGICAL MAPS?

Geological maps should be regularly published, but only after realistically pricing them, with the patent solely with the GSI. The price structure of the geological maps should be fixed on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis, taking into consideration the expenditure involved, number of geologists/surveyor's field days, scale of mapping and a clear knowledge of the market potential of the terrain mapped. The maps thus purchased by the user may be discussed, referred, criticized, but never be copied. Such a policy, however utopian it may sound, would act as a self correcting mechanism in improving the quality and accountability at every level in GSI as well as in preventing the arm chair geologists from misusing them.

Large scale and detailed maps are prepared at the cost of great physical strain and at considerable expenditure. The preparation of a detailed geological map on 1 : 2,000 scale of even a 500 m × 500 m area (with accompanied grid based sampling, triangulation and contouring) in a rugged terrain takes the whole efforts of two geologists and a surveyor for about 55–60 field days. Perhaps one way to recognise the efforts of these officers is to give patent rights to GSI in geological map publication. At present all publications from GSI are priced at rates which do not even meet the printing charges. This gross undervaluation of the department's own work, in the name of the dissemination of knowledge has to be stopped. I fail to understand why a consulting geologist who will be charging a fee from his client for his services, expects the basic geologic inputs from GSI either free of cost or for a song. Recently GSI has started making the expertise and facilities available with it in the Training Institute and in mineral exploration for outside agencies at realistic rates. The same concept should be extended to map publication. Geological maps should be prepared at user specified scales and be sold in visual as well as in digital formats. Digitization of the maps will save numerous hours in the compiler's and the draughtman's tables. Finally, the entire gamut of geological map publication need to be discussed, threadbare, in the perspective of the role GSI has to play in the nation's mineral industry.

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Dr. M. N. Qureshy in a letter addressed to the Editor has made the following comments on the Note, 'A tragedy too deep for words—Latur Earthquake of 30th September 1993' published in the Journal of the Geological Society of India, Vol. 42 (5), pp. 523-526.

1. There is nothing new in the idea that the Peninsula is not rigid and that it has been mentioned earlier by Oldham and Wadia.
2. The term seismic gap refers to 'areas along the plate boundary which have not recently ruptured in a major earthquake'.

3. The reference to Qureshy (1981) in the text was not given in the Reference and that this error does not speak well of the Journal or the author.

The author has forwarded the following clarifications :

1. The main object of my note drafted immediately after the Latur earthquake was to emphasize how impossible it is to predict the exact time and place of an earthquake and how important it is to bestow more attention to disaster management and mitigation of evils. I had only incidentally mentioned that Peninsular India too was subject to neotectonic activity. It was never my intention to claim priority for this view, nor was it an occasion to give an exhaustive bibliography on the subject.
2. In long term prediction, gaps in seismic activity have some significance. Global changes in seismicity through time have been recorded. Since 1991, there have been many earthquakes of high intensity and it is reasonable to infer that we are possibly entering a period of active seismicity.
3. I have already expressed regret for the unfortunate omission in the list of references of a paper referred to in the text. This was immediately set right, and an addendum issued long before the critic pointed to the discrepancy (Vol. 42 (6), p. 625, 1993).

EDITOR

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IGCP Project—314 on “Alkaline and Carbonatitic Magmatism of the Earth and related Ore Deposits”. Intends to correlate geological and tectonic setting, petrology, geochemistry and metallogeny of continental alkaline rocks and carbonatites, understand the conditions of the formation of rare metals in alkaline magmas, composition and heterogeneity of the mantle source of alkaline magmas, the geochemical criteria for prospecting mineral deposits associated with alkaline magmatism and define in more detail the alkaline magmas. The Project will continue upto 1995. Indian participation is invited to achieve the aims and objectives of the Project.

Contact Address: P. R. Sengupta, Convener, IGCP Project-314, Director, GSI, Central Petrological Laboratories, 15 A & B Kyd Street, 6th Floor, Calcutta 700 016.

Course on Geomodeling for Mineral Exploration and Development: March 23-24, 1994. CSRE, IIT, Bombay. The course is on mineral exploration and mining. Those interested may write to: Prof. V. S. Chandrasekaran, Head, Centre of Studies in Resource Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Powai, Bombay 400 076. Tel.: 578 2545, 578 6530

National Symposium on Applied Geochemistry: 23-25 March 1994. Organised by the Department of Applied Geology, A. C. College Campus, Guindy, Madras 600 025. For further particulars write to Dr. P. Periakali, Convener.