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No Joke. It Really Is Different This Time ... Right?

Saying "it's different this time" has long been a surefire way to elicit a laugh with an audience of commercial real estate professionals.

After all, there are few things more certain than the cyclicity of the industry. Many of today's leaders cut their teeth by finding profit in the S&L crisis in the early 1990s. So ingrained are cycles that a common way of denoting time is to reference the series of busts that follow the booms—the Russian bond crisis, 9/11, the global financial crisis, etc.

Today, eight years into a slow-moving recovery in which commercial real estate has outperformed most every other investment class, the discussion is moving from whether the sector is overdue for a correction to how long the recovery will run and whether the industry has finally learned the lessons of past mistakes.

"This market has beaten the pessimism out of me," the noted bear Richard Jones, a lawyer at Dechert, said during a panel at the recent Commercial Real Estate Finance Council's January 2018 Investors Conference.

Jones elaborated in a post on Dechert's "Crunched Credit" blog: "I give up. I simply can't see anything that will knock the continued growth of our economy, and hence, the continued health of the commercial real estate industry and the capital markets, off its current path. It's hard to see how this party ends any time soon, and if someone at CREFC breaks into a rendition of 'A Cockeyed Optimist' from South Pacific, I'm not gonna smirk."