

Which “ist” is’t?

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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WHICH ‘IST’ IS’T?

A recent article in the *Financial Post* talks about ever-toughening environmental controls and gives examples of what this can mean to the construction industry. “A firm digging a sewer trench in Halifax must use silenced compressors and drills equipped with dust collectors to bore its shot holes. It must also adjust the charges so vibrations don’t damage nearby houses. In Ottawa, a company building a subdivision has to (build) retention ponds to settle solids (and regulate) the outflow to maintain existing water levels. During construction of a water tank at Chalk River, Ontario, on a ridge covered with white pine, contractors had to check that that species of tree was well represented in other parts of the area before removing any. Marine contractors for government dredging projects in Nova Scotia have to dump dredged material in approved areas rather than hauling it out to sea for disposal. An Alberta company building roads in the Yukon must detour around a six foot square sign... that proclaims the area the nesting site of an endangered species¹.»

The average reader, on learning these facts, can sit back with a feeling of satisfaction that “someone” is taking an interest in the preservation of the environment. But any terminologist worthy of the name is immediately beset with a host of questions. Would that “someone” be an ecologist, an environ-

1. *The Financial Post*, Toronto, MacLean-Hunter Business Publishing Company, Weekly, February 16, 1980, in “Clearing the Path”.

mentalist, or a conservationist? And what about a preservationist, a protectionist or an anti-pollutionist?

Somewhat overwhelmed by the "ist"'s, the terminologist "ist" discovers that the English suffix "ist", when used to form a noun, may refer variously to a person who performs a specified action (the noun's root being the specifier), one who is a specialist in a named science or skill, or an adherent of a particular doctrine or code². Almost everyone, therefore, could describe himself as being some sort of "ist"! With this added challenge, the terminologist is then, as it were, impelled, along the fascinating path to search for the answers.

The first step is an understanding of the concepts involved. "The word "ecology" is derived from the Greek word 'oikos', meaning house or place to live, and from the word 'logos', meaning science or study³." It is "a branch of science concerned with the inter-relationship of organisms and their environments⁴". It is also known as environmental biology, bio-ecology and bionomics⁵. Environment, in its turn, is "the sum of all external conditions affecting the development and life of organisms⁶".

Infamous amongst those external conditions is pollution, defined as the "destruction or impairment of the purity of the environment⁷". There is air pollution: "The presence in the outdoor atmosphere of one or more contaminants such as dust, fumes, gas, mist, odor, smoke, or vapor in quantities and of characteristics and duration such as to be injurious to human, plant or animal life or to property, or to interfere unreasonably with the comfortable enjoyment of life and property⁸." There is also water pollution: "Contamination of water by materials such as sewage, effluent, chemicals, detergents, and fertilizer runoff⁹. Then too, there are environmental pollutants such as noise, fertilizer, pesticides, and thermal pollution¹⁰. And the seventies have accustomed us to the news of nuclear fall-out and acid rain.

The exploratory trail leads us next to conservation, also in the ecological field, and described as: "(a) deliberate, planned or thoughtful preserving, guarding or protecting; (b) care or keeping of, and supervision of something by a government authority or by a private association or business, as a planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction or neglect¹¹", so that it may be available for future generations. It is clear, from this definition, that the concept of conservation includes elements which are

2. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield, Mass., G & C Merriam Company, 1979, under "ist".
3. *Encyclopedia Americana*, New York, American Corporation, International Edition, 1972, Vol. 9, p. 588.
4. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, under "ecology".
5. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropaedia*, Chicago, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1979, Vol. III, p. 777.
6. *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms*, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 2nd Edition, 1978, *sv.*
7. *Ibid*, *sv.*
8. *Ibid*, *sv.*
9. *Ibid*, *sv.*
10. *Encyclopedia Americana*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 12, p. 481.
11. *Webster's Third New International dictionary*, Springfield, Mass., G & C Merriam Company, 1971, under "Conservation".

applicable to the ecology and the environment. In fact, the goal of conservation is said to be “the achievement of the highest sustainable quality of living by the rational utilization of the environment¹²”.

Natural resources include soil, water, minerals and forests, as well as wilderness and wild life. We find that air and water pollution are also an important conservation concern¹³.

With the basic information we now have, we can attempt to differentiate between the ecologist, the environmentalist and the conservationist, and throw some light on the preservationist, the protectionist and the anti-pollutionist.

The ecologist is a scientist whose title is sanctioned by a university degree. His science deals with the inter-relationship between organisms, including man, and he is concerned with anything in the environment which affects the balance between those organisms. His science embraces many fields, but for the purpose of this study is restricted to man and natural resources, and the effect of technology on those resources. The term “ecologist” is well established in reference material researched.

The ecologist may be an environmentalist — “one concerned about the quality of the human environment, specifically: a specialist in human ecology¹⁴” — “the branch of ecology that considers the relations of individual persons and of human communities with their particular environment¹⁵”.

The ecologist may also be a conservationist — “one that advocates conservation, especially of natural resources (as forests)¹⁶” if his concern is, for instance, “the relationship of forest trees to their environment, to one another and to other plants and to animals in the forest¹⁷” or “the harvesting of surplus populations to prevent the serious damage to habitats that results when wild life numbers are uncontrolled¹⁸”.

Thus far, we have dealt with the scientific aspect of ecology and the environment. If we reexamine the definition of environmentalist however, we note that anyone who is actively interested in the effect of the environment on the quality of life may call himself an environmentalist. For example, the ongoing test project to keep the St. Lawrence Seaway open for winter traffic concerns government environmental protection boards, community protection groups, private citizens as well as industry. Also, many universities now include environmental studies in their programmes thus sparking a broader informed interest. Although the term environmentalist was not used in major references researched, it appears in the National Geographic and Canadian Geographic Magazines¹⁹ and is heard frequently in the spoken word.

12. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropaedia, op. cit.*, Vol. 5, p. 39.

13. *Encyclopedia Americana, op. cit.*, Vol. 7, p. 618, 621.

14. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, op. cit.*, sv.

15. *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms, op. cit.*, sv.

16. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, op. cit.*, sv.

17. *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms, op. cit.*, under “forest ecology”.

18. *Encyclopedia Americana, op. cit.*, Vol. 7, p. 635.

19. *National Geographic Magazine*, Washington, D.C., National Geographic Society, Monthly, Feb. 1980, “The Pesticide Dilemma”, p. 148., *Canadian Geographic Magazine*, Ottawa, Royal Canadian Geographical Society, Bi-Monthly, Dec. 79/Jan. 80, “Acid Rain”, p. 38.

Indeed, the terms ecologist and environmentalist have become public bywords since the seventies, given impetus by such things as the exhaust fumes from automobiles, oil spills and Three Mile Island. There is a distinction, however, in the focus of their interest. In the putrification of Lake Erie, for example, the environmental concern is the deterioration in the quality of man's environment; the primary ecological interest is the contamination of the plant and animal life and the destruction of the habitat.

A word of caution. The established dictionary definition of environmentalist as "an advocate of a... theory that views environment rather than heredity as the important factor in the development and especially the cultural and intellectual development of an individual or group²⁰", bears little relation to the subject under study.

Conservationist, like environmentalist, has a very broad application apart from its scientific one. The key words in conservation are preservation, protection and management. Conservationist is a well established term with respect to forestry and wild life. The conservationist may have a university degree in forestry, for example, but the appellation often denotes an occupation. However, the element of "management" in conservation introducing, as it does, the fact that organizations, private enterprise and governments become involved, means that conservationist is often used as an adjective and may be applied simply to organizations or individuals who favour the principles. Some well known conservation groups are the Sierra Club in the United States, Greenpeace, and the World Wildlife Fund.

Preservation is one type of conservation measure, but the term "preservationist", defined as "one that advocates the preservation of a species (as a wildlife) from extinction²¹", is rarely used. Most texts prefer the word "conservationist". As an example, Theodore Roosevelt is considered the first truly "conservationist" President, because he "did much to popularize the movement to safeguard resources²²" by establishing national parks.

The description of conservation introduces "protecting" as analogous, if not synonymous to "preserving" and could lead us to believe that a protectionist is similar to a conservationist. The dictionary definition reveals, however, that a protectionist is "an advocate of government economic protection for domestic producers through restrictions on foreign competition²³". Obviously this is not in the ecological field. There has been, however, for many years, systematic research on the need for environmental protection to improve the effectiveness of human performance under all environmental conditions. The distinctive element of this concept is that it represents the protection of man and equipment against the stresses of the environment, whereas many facets of environmental concern involve the protection of the environment against man.

20. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, op. cit., sv.*

21. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary with Seven Language Dictionary, Chicago, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1976, Vol. 1, p. 569.*

22. *Encyclopedia Americana, op. cit., Vol. 7, p. 636.*

23. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, op. cit., sv.*

It should be noted that the article in the McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia dealing with environmental protection made no reference to “protectionist²⁴”.

“Anti-pollutionist” is listed in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary with Seven Language Dictionary* (1976) as a derivative of the adjective “anti-pollution²⁵”. An anti-pollutionist might thus be assumed to be one who is against particular types of pollution or who fights for anti-pollution legislation. But this is surmise. The term anti-pollutionist was not used in other reference material researched. Significantly, also, neither the reference service of the McLennan Library of McGill University, nor that of STOP, (Society to Overcome Pollution)²⁶, was able to produce any written evidence of the use of anti-pollutionist or protectionist, per se, nor did a review of related articles over the past two years in the *National Geographic Magazine* and the *Canadian Geographic Magazine*.

Both protectionist and anti-pollutionist are, however, heard in the spoken word. Bruce Walker, Research Coordinator of STOP and Dr. Fred J. Knelman, environmentalist, Full Professor of Science and Human Affairs at Concordia University, deplored this use: protectionist because of the confusion with its long established meaning; anti-pollutionist because, according to Dr. Knelman, it implies an absolutist approach towards the elimination of pollution, whereas environmentalists concede that some pollution is inevitable in a technological society. It can be concluded that protectionist is incorrect in the ecological field and anti-pollutionist is to be avoided; their use, in any case, is rare.

And now, the terminologist has defined the “ists” to his satisfaction, and with his new found knowledge, knows that the “someone” in Halifax who is interested in the silent compressors, the dust collectors and the vibrations is an environmentalist. The ecologist’s antenna goes up at the thought of any change to the water level which might alter the balance of the habitat. The pine trees are the concern of the conservationist, as is the nesting site, and the environmentalist and the ecologist are involved with the dumping of the dredged material. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

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