

biological truth. It undermines social virtues and institutions and 'bears a considerable part of the blame for the moral and cultural collapse that threatens the Western world'. 'The present-day rulers of America, China and the Soviet Union are unanimous in one opinion: that the unlimited conditionability of man is highly desirable. Their belief in the pseudo-democratic doctrine is based on the wish that it were true. . . . It is no exaggeration to call this doctrine inhuman, since everything specifically human is unwelcome to its supporters. . . . "Down with individuality!" is the slogan'.

Recognising the truth and countering falsehood is basic to our survival. This book contains the kind of lead we want, and I recommend you to read and disseminate it yourself.

VERO WYNNE-EDWARDS

Conservation, by Archie S. Mossman. Intext, \$4.50

What is Ecology? by D. F. Owen. Oxford, £2.75

La Synthèse Ecologique, by P. Duvigneaud. Doin, Paris. Frs 128.00

These three books exemplify the different approaches seen in most of the publications dealing with environmental topics which are appearing in such numbers today.

Professor Mossman's is said by the publishers to focus on the principles and philosophy of conservation; the author suggests that it will help the reader to make essential decisions regarding the future of our planet. In fact, although the book is readable and contains a good deal of useful but familiar information about ecology and conservation, its main thesis is the uncritical acceptance of most of the more alarming projections regarding environmental degradation and ecocatastrophe. Thus 'Limits of Growth', whose own authors only claim it to be a demonstration of methods, is treated as though its conclusions were established facts. The use of insecticides is compared to Russian roulette. This is not a major contribution to the literature of conservation.

What is Ecology? is more valuable. It defines ecology as the 'scientific study concerned with the complex relationships between plants and animals and their surroundings, how they interact with one another, and how their numbers are limited', and then proceeds to justify and explain this definition. The book, which is illustrated with examples from many parts of the world, is intended rather for the general reader who wishes to find what ecology is about, and who is willing to go beyond the sensational examples publicised by the media, than for the university biology student, but many such students would undoubtedly benefit from its well balanced approach. This is a useful contribution to ecological thinking.

La Synthèse Ecologique may be enjoyed at several levels, for it is a delightful yet serious picture book dealing with the principles of ecology. It is a pity it is so expensive (over £12 at the current rate of exchange), for it can be warmly recommended, among other things, as a text book for those, particularly scientists, who wish to learn to use the French language. Anyone with a smattering of ecological knowledge and the most elementary French should be able to understand and benefit from the text, which leads the reader painlessly from an elementary explanation of the ecosystem to a quite advanced discussion of the place of man in the biosphere. In these days when teachers of French wish their books to be more relevant to modern life (in distinction to the old 'la plume de ma tante' approach) this volume, dealing clearly with the major problems of the environment, both urban and rural, and including even *pollutions morales*, should be generally acceptable. The admirable and most decorative colour illustrations are uniquely successful in communicating both basic ecological information and a proper understanding of the use, for this purpose, of the French language.

KENNETH MELLANBY