Once more warnings of overpopulation and impending food shortage are being sounded. With practically all of our good agricultural land available without reclamation already in use and the recognition that any further expansion of our crop area will be on lands poorer or more expensive to reclaim than those already in cultivation, speculation is rife as to the future trend of the volume of agricultural production. Students of the problem are taking stock of our land resources, and once more with a steadily growing population the name of Malthus is becoming familiar to many lips.

The threatened disappearance of our export surplus of bread grains as a result of the relatively short crop of wheat harvested this year has aroused considerable discussion not only in the United States but also in the densely populated countries of northwestern Europe. Both in Germany and England great emphasis is again being laid on the necessity of increasing agricultural production. In Germany especially the ultimate goal hoped for is absolute self-sufficiency from the standpoint of food production.

With the greater part of our available agricultural area already in use, the problem of productivity and soil fertility is now coming to the fore as one of the most important phases of the land utilization problem.

Ignoring the question concerning how long our export surplus of wheat and food products will continue, we are doubtless, sometime in the immediate future, going to face the problem that confronted northwestern Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century, namely, that of bringing about an increase in agricultural production on the lands now under cultivation by the use of more intensive methods.

Within the short time allotted to me I do not wish to become involved in a discussion of the population and food production problem which was discussed so thoroughly in the recent session of the Institute of Politics, but the foregoing is the background of the renewed interest in the alleged deterioration of our soils. Since the word alleged is usually coupled with the word deterioration, it may be

1Paper read as a part of the symposium on "Soil Deterioration" at the meeting of the Society held in Chicago, Ill., November 16, 1925.