THE honor you have bestowed upon me, by asking that I speak before you this evening, is deeply appreciated. I know your invitation was not based on any ability I have to discuss the subject which is your life work. So many of you are my personal friends and know me so well I need not dwell upon this point.

Endeavoring to think how I might contribute to this program, the idea of merchant and customer came to my mind. I believe the producer always likes to know what the consumer thinks of his product. At any rate the latter assumes his right to express his opinion, although he might be, and usually is, unable to make a better one. So, I will assume that position or relationship on this occasion.

Our organization has been one of your best customers. We have used and recommended large volumes of your product. Not only have we worked with and used it, but we have held many schools and classes teaching farm managers and appraisers the work and results you have accomplished. Our students now operate in most of the states and I do not believe it is too much to say that between 25 and 50% of the appraisals made in the central part of the United States are based on appraisal methods we have taught. Many of the large insurance companies have adopted our plans for all their appraisals. Our studies and field hand books have been completed, or are in process, for 12 of the states. Samples are available for your inspection if you care to see them.

When I began making appraisals in 1916, I met all the requirements of an appraiser, as far as soils were concerned. If I answered from two to six questions on the appraisal form — they were generally color, depth, kind. Occasionally we had a few more one word descriptions to add. Little wonder that the president of one large insurance company said, “he could prove by the appraisals in their files that every loan they had made was on a Chocolate Brown silt loam soil.” At best, each appraiser was supposed to describe the soils he appraised. There being no standards, and few if any, appraisers familiar with soil surveys, it is not surprising that a given soil often had many different descriptions, and few soils were properly or effectively described.

When we began teaching appraisers, we found they were not soils men, and we could not make soil specialists out of them. This forced a complete change in procedure. Our plan was to have them to identify, rather than describe soils. We followed your descriptions.

We have found by experience that we can, in less than one week, teach a group of non-college men to identify soils with less than 10% error. I have taught groups of appraisers one or two days in instruction, one day of field demonstration, and then sent them to the field on the third or fourth day, and had every man correctly identify every soil on the farms studied.

The plan for identification is very simply described on less than two pages, single spaced typing, in the hand books.

When the appraiser arrives at the farm, he turns to the County soil key. He must determine whether he is on bottom land, terrace or upland, which is not difficult. Then he determines the color of the surface soil, and its slope.

Each time he makes one of these decisions, he eliminates from 10 to 75% of the possible series he must consider. All this is a surface observation without making an examination of the soil profile. Ordinarily he has but one to three series left as possible chances or selections. He then turns to his soil series sheets and selects the most probable one. As he reads its description, he verifies his judgment by what he sees on the surface in ditch or road cuts, and from his soil auger. He seldom misses. When he identifies, then the description is simple — he just copies it from his hand book. This means, descriptions for a given series and type are always the same, are accurate and they follow the language which you, as the head of your Soils Department have used.

Of course, in supplemental discussion, the appraiser shows fully how the soils on the farm under inspection differ from the true type, but he starts from and compares with your series and type descriptions.