The committee on Horizon Criteria was established three years ago when it became apparent that the indiscriminate use of the alphabetic nomenclature commonly employed to designate soil horizons was causing considerable confusion.

The letter symbols A, B, and C, as originally applied to profile units by the Russian soil scientists indicated only a simple succession of horizons. A deeper significance was gradually attached to them as the interpretation of soil types progressed. When applied to a given soil type, they were used to express a concept of development. Later, they were defined in terms of the processes involved in their formation. Unfortunately when introduced in this country, they were generally applied to all soil profiles, without regard to definition or differences in characteristics. It is clearly evident that many variations, some of fundamental nature, exist in the characteristics of horizons that are not given similar designation, and that the continued use of the letter symbols without qualification promotes further misunderstanding.

Mikiforoff pointed out last year in his discussion "The History of A, B, C" that the Russians have not been content to use the letter symbols as formerly applied, but have devised other schemes of nomenclature. Most of these are more complex but largely based on the processes involved in the development of the unit. None of them have proven entirely satisfactory, nor have they been generally accepted. The literature indicates that the use of the alphabetic nomenclature among other European soil scientists is not uniform, some preferring entirely different terms. It is plain that soil scientists are not agreed upon the designations of horizons in the soil profile.

Our committee was organized for the twofold purpose of determining the characteristics in soils that could most satisfactorily serve as a basis of differentiating all profiles into units, and of suggesting appropriate designations for these divisions. Complete descriptions of the characteristics of all important profiles in the major soil groups must be available before any definite conclusions can be reached. Joffe's comprehensive paper on "Russian Studies on Soil Profiles" presented to the association last year is of the type of most value to the committee. A program was outlined by the committee during the past year which if completed will make available the description of the profiles in the major soil groups which occur.