# The Mail Bag

The Church and Rural Alberta

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Politor, Guide: In connection with the recent meeting in Toronto of the executive of the Board of Home Missions and Recisl Service of the Preshyterian church in Canada, attention was called to statements madalas from the United Farm Women of Alberta with reference to an alleged neglect by the churches of the rural communities of that province and the lack of religious instruction of children.

Last May, Mrs. L. B. Barritt, representing the U.F.W.A., appeared by invitation before the Preshyterian Synod of Alberta and presented an incomplete report of a survey of religious conditions in the province. The Synod appointed a committee to examine the documents on which this report was based. Owing to circumstances that examination has only now been completed. It has been found, that while much interesting matter has been provided for consideration, the documents do not warrant the making of sweeping charges regarding the failure of the

stances it is somewhat surprising to find numerous suggestions coming from school districts that the church should supply expensive equipment for the education and entertainment of the people. If this could be done in a prudent way, the Church, would be glad to co-operate with the people of the localities. The information communicated from many quarters that there is reason to believe that few children are receiving religious instruction in their homes is a matter in which the church can act only by inspiration and example. Can anything relieve parents of the responsibility in this connection?

We are sincerely grateful to Mrs. Barritt. and other members of the U.F.W.A. for spending so much time and trouble in endeavoring to investigate conditions, and the church will rejoice to have their support in any effect to modify these conditions for the better. Meanwhile, with some 350 of the ministers and missionaries of the Preabyterian church alone, at the front or in training for war, and other churches in a similar predicament, the

Victory Bonds bear interest at the rate of five-and-a-half per cent. and can always be turned into money at need. They cannot depreciate in value, unless Germany wins world-dominion; and in that event what would become of Canadian savings? Germany would take them as part of the tribute levied upon Canada.

churches. It is, on the contrary, remarkable that so much has been attempted and accomplished. It is also gratifying to observe the wide-spread demand for the services of the church. Even before the outbreak of the war, the churches had great difficulty in meeting the needs of the population. This difficulty was partly overcome by measures of co-operation. Since the outbreak of the war, the large enlistment of ministers and student missionaries has rendered extension of the missionary work of the churches almost wholly impossible. In these circumstances the carrying on of regular and occasional services and of Sunday schools over important areas must depend on the responsible activity of the people themselves. This activity has been too often lacking, and it should be aroused by the members of such bodies as the U.F.W.A. The churches are ready to give all the aid in their power.

During the past summer, the Presbyterian church alone, in spite of the
serious depletion of the ranks, has
maintained in Alberta, apart from the
ministers of self-sustaining charges, no
fewer than 150 ministers and missionaries of both sexes, giving service at 450
appointments. And this has been done
through the bountiful generosity of the
church at large, while the people of
the mission fields are only slowly being
led to realize the measure of liberality
with which they should provide for the
maintenance of religious ordinances
among themselves. In these circum-

churches will be fortunate if they can in any way conserve the good results already obtained. — William Simons, Moderator of Synod of Alberta, Toronto.

#### Replies to Mr. Ross

Editor, Guide.—Some time ago you published from one David Ross, of Strassburg, under the heading "Cultivate Idle Land."

Strassburg, under the heading "Cultivate Idle Land."

In justice to the public, I feel it is imperative that such a scheme as the one outlined should be flatly rejected. Even if the plan is feasible (which I doubt very much) it would certainly be a dis-service to the country.

We have all heard of the great need of still greater production, and there are, I am sure, very few people who doubt this fact.

But if Mr. Ross or any other Guide readers of like opinion will reply and tell us of any reasonable plan wherehad the like opinion will reply and tell us of any reasonable plan wherehad western povinces can be maintained, and given proper cultivation it will be a great relief to thousands of minds between Winnipeg and the mountains.

There are farms galore scattered throughout the country which have gone back to weeds and quack grass during the last four years, but especially the last two years.

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from nowhere, not by any means. You will find them within a mile or so of market or good roads and telephone lines. These farms might be made to



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