

At last, some good news

NOWADAYS there rarely seems to be any good news to come out of the strife-torn Republic of South Africa.

Accordingly, it is both refreshing and heartening to encounter a story of caring humanity and social foresight from that troubled land that could well serve as an example for people in supposedly more socially enlightened countries.

The half-hour documentary video movie *Promise of the Veld* is just such a story, and it goes a long way towards restoring the balance of the ill-omened news reports that form the main impression the rest of the world has of South African society.

It records the experience of Roly and Moira Kingswill, fourth-generation white farmers in the Karoo region of the Cape Province, who, in the mid-1930s, were seized by a vision for a better and more humanitarian direction for South African society.

It was a vision that was revolutionary in its day and, to a certain extent, still is.

At the time the Kingswills were young, moderately prosperous sheep farmers. They were a good Christian couple, but with that mildly arrogant complacency of the whites that

has been at much of the root of South Africa's present problems.

But beneath the complacency Roly was troubled. He sensed that the country was heading towards a precipice of potential disaster and that some action needed to be taken by people like himself if this was to be averted.

As a Christian he felt instinctively that God must have a plan, and just as surely he knew that he must have a part to play in it. He also glimpsed a further truth — "When man listens, God speaks."

He applied these beliefs, opening his mind to be receptive to whatever message there might be for him, and illumination did indeed come. He was vouchsafed a clear perception, not only of the problems but of the measures he could personally take to try to combat them.

As he saw it, the country's dilemma, at least in the rural areas, stemmed from three main factors — soil erosion, racial tension and unemployment — and he embarked upon his own personal program of economic commonsense and social humanity to fight these ills. It was a plan which initially involved the Kingswills in a considerable amount of economic

sacrifice and white social opposition.

But they persevered and overcame, and now, some fifth years later, the results of their initiatives are recognised throughout the country as models of the sort of social reforms that South Africa so badly needs.

Promise of the Veld is a heartwarming and inspiring little movie. Not only does it offer a glimpse of the humans and concerned side of the South African coin — in sharp contrast to the news media's obsessive portrayal of strife and violence — but, in a world so wracked by acrimony and dissension, it shows what can be achieved by individuals of foresight and good-will.

Filmed against the splendid vistas of the African veld with a delightfully lilting musical score as background, *Promise of the Veld* makes rewarding viewing, both for the eye and the heart.

It is available in Australia from Grosvenor Books, 21 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, 3205. Local enquiries for further information can be made to Mr Geoff Warrington, 84 Bridge Street, Toowoomba, who owns the copy upon which this review is based.