

Evening Post

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Long night

YET another overseas visitor — one who has travelled widely in South Africa and met thousands of her people—has pointed to the main cause of our trouble.

In his stimulating new book, "Life Begins Today", Mr. Stephen Foot, an active campaigner for Moral Re-armament, says it is sad that so few educated White South Africans have any contact with educated non-White South Africans.

Some White South Africans know that there are such people, he says — ministers of religion, teachers, a few doctors and lawyers, business men and clerks—but they never meet.

It is this great and widening racial gulf, this deliberate denial of an opportunity to meet, discuss common problems and agree on the shaping of policies for our joint security and progress, that is causing the breakdown of civilisation in our multi-racial land.

It is this man-made gulf, inspired by ignorance and fear, that caused a sober and extremely influential newspaper, the New York Times, to say yesterday that the world was watching events in South Africa with "a growing sense of dread as well as disgust . . . all one can see ahead — if the Nationalists have their way — is shipwreck."

Wrong turning

It was not always thus in South Africa.

Less than five years ago our country was regarded as one of the more fortunate and promising.

What caused the sharp and alarming change in our fortunes?

We believe historians in the future will find that we took the wrong turn when we rejected the Cape policy in 1936, and took 14,000 African voters off the common voters' roll in the Cape.

It was the removal of educated Africans from the common voters' roll, apartheid-style, that gave the extremists in the Nationalist camp their chance: it made their eventual accession to power under the parliamentary party system inevitable.

But the real harm done by that great political blunder, executed in a constitutional way (with a two-thirds majority in Parliament) was this: it made exploitation of unenlightened White voters' fears a highly profitable activity for politicians wishing to hold power.

There was a time when Nationalist politicians courted African and Coloured voters in the Cape. That was a fine thing for our national life, since it put the political emphasis not on racial conflict but on less dangerous and more useful matters, such as education, housing, prices and public administration.

The first light

This was the form of security for the future which the Cape Colony, the area of oldest White settlement in all Africa, offered to the experimental new Union of South Africa. It was a form of security on which great and wise Cape Afrikaners, like Mr. J. W. Sauer and "Onse Jan" Hofmeyr, were absolutely insistent.

Today the mob have been put in control, at the polling-booths. The responsible citizens, the thinkers, on both sides of the parliamentary party battle-line, have been pushed into the background to look on helplessly.

Only when a White group, however small it may be at first, has the courage and the foresight to come out openly and take an untreating stand on the first principles of civilisation, including the right of all civilised persons to economic and political opportunity, regardless of skin colour, will our long night of fear begin to end: only then shall we begin to see the first light of dawn.