



**TASA** The Australian  
Sociological Association

## Contact Email for January 2017

Last week I wandered around the local market. There I found a book by H.G. Wells (21 September 1866 – 13 August 1946) that I didn't know existed. For those who don't know him, he was a prolific English writer. He is remembered today, mostly for his science fiction stories. However, the book I found, published in 1928, shows he also wrote articles for newspapers in both England and the U.S. In the introduction he rails against the editors who cut his articles to pieces, and assures the present readers that the content of this book is what he originally wrote. The title is "The Way the World is Going" and, from what I have read so far, could have been written yesterday.

Much of what he writes is political sociology, taking things a lot closer to the bone than perhaps others would today. For example:

*"We find in all the great democratic countries that the direction of all affairs has passed into the hands of men who are great merely as politicians, and who are otherwise neither remarkably intelligent, creative, nor noble beings.*

*There are, indeed, in a great number of cases, conspicuously shifty and ambiguous, strategic, and practically ineffective. Let the reader try to name a single man of first-class moral and intellectual quality in British, French, American, or German politics to-day. With a sort of baffled dismay we look to these men we have elected to make the world anew for us, and we see leaders who do not lead and representatives who, at best, impress us as acutely humiliating caricatures of the struggling soul of our race. We realise that the real working our human destiny is going on, so far as it is going on, independently of, or partially hampered by our ostensible public life.*

*In America, France, and Great Britain, for example, where democracy has had the longest run, we see that the democratic method has brought about practically the same situation. A number of politicians have secured the confidence and support of the main groups of prosperous people, who do not want the world changed to any great extent. These politicians of the right and centre form so solid, well alimented, and effective a constellation that they are generally in power, albeit not always in an electoral majority. Naturally these politicians of conservation have the support of all the great selling businesses which advertise in the Press and influence the Press." (20 March 1927.)*

Much of his book seems to be about Democracy and whether it is a form of government that works. Most of us make the assumption that it does and is the best form of government, but is it? Winston Churchill once said: "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter." Plato concluded that democracy was a corrupt and unjust form of government. Emma Marriott, in her book "Bad History", points out that the American constant cry of "democracy" is not what the Constitution or the founding fathers wanted. Benjamin Franklin & George Washington were united in their opposition to, and mistrust of, democracy. For them, and for many of their contemporaries, democracy equalled mob rule, anarchy, and the world itself had somewhat grubby associations. The fifty-five delegates who devised and worded the U.S. Constitution were largely members of the gentry and lawyers. Delegate Edmund Randolph spoke of the 'follies and turbulence of democracy', while Roger Sherman said that 'the people should have as little to do as possible about Government.' I had not realised how controversial democratic government has been. I will have to think about it

*Alan Scott*, Continuing education Officer.