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Edna Hindie Lemay, ed., *Dictionnaire des Législateurs, 1791-1792*. 2 vols. Ferney-Voltaire: Centre International d'Etude du XVIIIe Siècle, 2007. xxxix + 821 pp. Preface, chronology, appendices, bibliography, and thematic index. € 250.00 (hb). ISBN 978-2-84559-025-0

Review by Marisa Linton, Kingston University.

Edna Lemay dedicated much of her professional life to the French Revolution. The *Dictionnaire des Constituants* (1991), on which she worked for many years, is an indispensable handbook for anyone studying the Constituent Assembly. Many historians would have considered this a sufficient achievement for one lifetime and thereafter have thought only about enjoying a peaceful retirement. Lemay retired officially from the EHESS in 1994. But this did not stop her working. On the contrary, she determined to do for the Legislative Assembly what she had done for the Constituent. She undertook to compile an exhaustive dictionary that would give detailed information about the lives of every deputy who was a member of the Legislative. Since, thanks to the self-denying ordinance proposed by Robespierre, none of the members of the Constituent sat in the Legislative, she had to start all over again from scratch. Her energy and tenacity in taking up a project that would have quailed all but the most stout-hearted historians, compels admiration, even awe. Such a project could only be achieved by the labours of a great many people.

Lemay brought together a team of scholars, most of them furnished by the Institut Historique de la Révolution Française. Fifteen principal collaborators are named here. In her Introduction Lemay speaks with warmth and generosity about the many people and institutions that contributed to this collective enterprise. But much of the work of co-ordination, harmonisation and overall responsibility necessarily fell on her shoulders. In the end, her own health gave out, and she died, aged seventy-eight, in 2006. In spite of this loss, the dedicated team of collaborators brought the volumes to completion. Thanks to their hard work in innumerable archives, the *Dictionnaire des Législateurs* was published in 2007. It stands as a fitting memorial, both to the 768 men who sat in the Legislative Assembly, and to Edna Lemay, a fine historian. Bernard Gainot speaks for his fellow collaborators on the *Dictionnaire des Législateurs* and for many other historians when he pays tribute to her qualities, “le travail, l’amitié et la fidélité” (p. xii).

The Legislative Assembly has never attracted the level of attention given to the Constituent Assembly and the National Convention. The Constituent Assembly witnessed the beginning of the Revolution and the writing of the Constitution. The Convention had all the intense drama of the first French Republic and the Terror. The Legislative Assembly did not last as long as either, a scant ten months. But in that brief time the fate of the monarchy, France, and much of Europe, changed irrevocably. The deputies of the Legislative Assembly were presented with the task of implementing the Constitution of 1791, a Constitution for which they had not been responsible. The deputies were faced by considerable problems: religious, political and financial. Their time in office was overshadowed by Varennes and the instability of the constitutional monarchy. Their greatest achievement (if you can call it that) was to seek a solution for France’s political divisions by embarking on a war that would dominate Europe for over twenty years. Brissot and the group that became known as the Girondins spearheaded that drive to war, but it was embraced by a near totality of the deputies: only seven voted against it. As Mona Ozouf

puts it in her elegant Preface the achievement of the *Dictionnaire* will facilitate the task of historians “de pénétrer ce qui demeure le grand mystère de la Législative: la radicalisation accélérée d’une Assemblée qui, loin d’être un terne intervalle entre Constituante et Convention, donne à voir, en dix mois seulement, la force irrésistible de la dynamique révolutionnaire” (p. ix). A better knowledge of the Legislative Assembly helps us to find answers to two fundamental questions of the Revolution: the failure of the Constitutional monarchy and the origins of the Terror.

So what kind of men were the deputies? They were new to national politics and tended to be younger than their predecessors in the Constituent, but nearly all of them had been politically active in the early years of the Revolution, either in municipal politics through participation in one of the revolutionary clubs. As Ozouf says of their political experiences since 1789: “ce sont de vrais fils de la Révolution” (p. ix). Out of 768, 191 went on to be members of the National Convention and thus, as Lemay states, were implicated in the Terror (p. xiii). There was great diversity in the composition of the Assembly. For every well-known figure, for every Brissot or Condorcet, there were many obscure deputies who played little or no part in the debates. Lemay calculates that 49 deputies spoke very frequently and these were the men who dominated the mood in the Assembly. Their names are listed separately on p. 787. Not surprisingly, many names associated with Brissot appear on this list. A further 205 deputies participated fairly often. But of the rest, 264 intervened on only one or two occasions, whilst a startling 250 never spoke in the debates. This gives us some idea of the daunting task faced by the historians who combed the departmental, municipal and national archives to put together the traceable details of these lives. Each entry has its own bibliography, listing the archives that were used to compile it and, in the cases of the better-known deputies, much of the secondary material regarding them.

The method used to set out the material in the *Dictionnaire* was designed to facilitate research. Rather than write a mini-essay on each deputy, Lemay’s approach was to compile a *curriculum vitae* of known information about their lives before, during and after the period of the Assembly. The layout makes it easy to rapidly identify salient facts. The contributors have put together an impressive amount of material on the personal lives of the deputies: their families, education, profession, connections, wealth and material goods both before and after the Legislative Assembly. Naturally, the most important sections are on the participation of the deputies in the Assembly: Lemay herself drew up much of this material. The political participation and, where possible, the political attitudes of individual deputies are summarised here. One of the most interesting pieces of data gives the voting figures for the seven occasions when the Assembly resorted to an *appel nominal* allowing us to identify the voting patterns of individual deputies. This information tends to contradict much of the deputies’ own rhetoric about rejecting political parties and representing only the common interest, and enables us to trace the origins of political parties. Even where the subject of the vote itself did not seem at first sight to be a major political issue (for example, whether the mutinous soldiers of Châteauevieux should be admitted to the session), it is possible to distinguish amongst many of the deputies a consistent tendency to vote either ‘right’ or ‘left’. The political implications were well recognised at the time. A comparative table of how the deputies of the Legislative voted in the *appels nominaux* was circulated before the voting to the Convention took place, and presumably contributed to the fact that only two of the deputies who were known to vote on the right were elected to the Convention (p. xviii).

In addition to the dictionary entries on the deputies, there is an extensive scholarly apparatus. There are several appendices that list the political activities of the deputies: those who were elected to serve on the various committees and commissions; those who held the offices of president, vice-president and secretary of the Assembly; how the deputies voted in the seven *appels nominaux*; and those deputies who were members of the Jacobin club (before and during the Legislative), the Feuillants club, and the club de la Réunion. Another appendix details the order in which the deputies were voted for by the eight-three departments, together with their professions and whether or not they spoke in the Legislative Assembly. In addition there is information on the twenty-eight ministers who served in the period of the Assembly. A chronology gives much helpful information, including the dates of the more important

debates. There is also a thematic index of the debates and subjects to which deputies contributed in the Assembly, compiled by Alison Patrick.

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