

Biographical Dictionaries of Parliamentarians: Considerations and Examples

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That the Australian Senate has embarked on the production of a multi-volume biographical dictionary of its members should be widely welcomed as a further indication of the growth of parliamentary studies in Australia. The dictionary will add to our knowledge of senators of bygone days and will provide an incentive to further studies of this important parliamentary body. We still await the definitive history of the Australian Senate: gradually the indispensable foundation of source materials and reliable reference works is being laid for such purposes. The biographical dictionary will be awaited as a valuable aid to our understanding of Australian political and parliamentary history.

Biographical dictionaries of parliamentarians and legislators are no novelty. There are already a number in existence. The US Congress issued in 1997 its *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989: Bicentennial Edition*, a massive work of some 2108 pages.¹ The introduction to this work briefly surveys earlier biographical compilations of US federal legislators, starting with Charles Lanham's *Dictionary of Congress* (1859). Since each House of the US Congress has its official historian, this must greatly facilitate the production of such authoritative and large-scale works.

¹ *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1996*. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1989. (Senate Document no. 100-34) 2108 pp. Another edition was published in 1997.

The History of Parliament Trust in Britain has ongoing objectives of documenting the history of parliamentary government there and recording details of the membership of the House of Commons. In 1964 it published its now famous three-volume set *The House of Commons 1754-1790*, by Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke.² This work, recognised as ground-breaking in its detailed analysis of a not fully understood period, contains biographical entries for the members of the Commons as well as constituency histories. Mention might be made at this point of another work of different value, a four-volume biographical compilation, derived from *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* and entitled *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament ... A Biographical Dictionary of the House of Commons*, compiled chiefly by Michael Stenton.³ The first volume covers the period 1832-1885, whilst the last volume covers 1945-1979.

The objective of the present paper is to consider the nature and purposes of parliamentary biographical dictionaries, drawing observations from the items already mentioned. In particular, however, a detailed examination of yet another parliamentary biographical dictionary, one in German dealing with the fate of the members of the parliament (Reichstag) of the Weimar Republic after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, will serve to focus attention on points which might be applied to the Australian Senate's project. Before proceeding with this intention, it is useful to consider briefly the nature of national biographical dictionaries in general. Parliamentary biographical dictionaries may be considered a sub-genre of this more embracing type of dictionary.

National Biographical Dictionaries

One of the great British publishing ventures of the nineteenth century was the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB). There have been supplements issued this century and the work is by its nature virtually without end. Edited initially from 1882 by Sir Leslie Stephen, the set had some 66 volumes by 1901. Counterparts to it exist in other European countries. In 1896 Stephen, by then no longer editor of DNB, wrote a short essay, entitled *National Biography*, distilling his experience and thoughts on the enterprise. It is still well worth reading. In it he explains his view of the purpose of national biography, how the selection of entries is made, and how the entries are crafted. He provides illustrations of what even obscure lives can contribute to historical understanding of a period. Indeed, it is just such lives, rather than those of the great and famous, which offer insight into the everyday and minute particulars which often provide the underlay for the broad, more generalising pictures historians may wish to draw.⁴

² *The House of Commons 1754-1790* [vols 1-3, by] Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke. (The History of Parliament) London, HMSO for History of Parliament Trust, 1964.

³ *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament: ... a Biographical Dictionary of the House of Commons Based on Annual Volumes of 'Dod's Parliamentary Companion' ...* [ed. by] Michael Stenton, Volume 1, 1832-1885 [to Volume 4, 1945-1979] London, Harvester Press/ Humanities Press, 1979- .

⁴ *National Biography*, pp. 1-36 in *Studies of a Biographer* [vol. 1], by Sir Leslie Stephen. London, Duckworth, [1929]. Originally published in 1898.

National biography, even in multi-volume compilations, represents, of course, only a tiny fraction of a country's population. Selection of these representative individuals for inclusion may offer a useful key for understanding values, prejudices and expectations of the era in which the compilation takes place. In 1998, the announcement of the publication on the Internet of the world's largest biographical reference database indicates what the trend may be. The German-based *International Biographical Index* has published on the World Wide Web data on approximately 1.7 million individuals. The project envisages that by the year 2000 information on six million individuals from a period of some 2800 years will be placed on the Internet. One is not immediately sure whether to be appalled or grateful that all this will be available to us. Are the entries to add to what has been termed the 'sludge' of the Internet, or will they be of a more refined quality? Judgment must be held in abeyance.⁵

Is national biography the most difficult of all biographical undertakings? Some may believe that it can never be wholly satisfactory because it involves value judgments in such basic matters as who deserves inclusion (or exclusion) and the treatment and scope of entries. Since there are no universal standards available for guidance on such matters, differences of opinion will inevitably arise. What suited the nineteenth century does not always suit us today. Some critics believe that our century, with its strong awareness of psychological factors in explaining human behaviour, has better claims for understanding personality and motivation than was possible in previous times. Views such as these will have some impact on what is expected of a national biography. The rise of psychobiography in political and historical studies is a sign of this modern trend, but it has not passed without challenge. However, agreement will be readily found for the necessity of accuracy and completeness in core factual information (e.g. correct names, dates, family relationships, career details). Soundness in the interpretation of historical events would also be expected. Interpretation of behaviour, character or motives is much more contentious since such things cannot generally be objectively validated. In certain cases such interpretation may be unavoidable in the interests of historical truth and understanding.

It is perhaps significant that there have been in recent years a wide range of biographical dictionaries published on people who did not always find themselves listed in DNB. These are often persons who were religious and political radicals, women, and persons from 'vulgar' popular culture and sports backgrounds. The publication in 1993 of *The Dictionary of National Biography: Missing Persons*, edited by C.S. Nicholls is an attempt of the twentieth century to rectify oversights or prejudices of the nineteenth century.⁶ The Preface to this volume is extremely illuminating on these oversights: over 100,000 extra names were suggested by scholars and the general public for inclusion. In the upshot 1086 names were successful, 12 per cent of them being women. Only 3 per cent of the entries for the numerous DNB volumes are for women [Preface, p. vii].

⁵ See report in *Kulturchronik*, no. 3, 1998 [English language edition], p.50. Published by Inter Nationes, Bonn. The URL for the work mentioned is <<http://www.saur.de>>

⁶ *The Dictionary of National Biography: Missing Persons*, edited by C.C. Nicholls. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

Since national biographies (as distinct from Who's Whos of contemporary worthies) deal with the dead, this influences the range of information offered. Hindsight operates in this context. But what about the more recently deceased whose families and descendants may be still active or even in public life? Obituaries are generally short and not expected to be other than respectful. Sensitivities are likely to be important in obituaries and biographical compilations of the recently deceased (with possible legal implications) which are absent when we deal with the long dead. The views of Sir Leslie Stephen provide us with further points to consider and weigh up:

A dictionary [i.e. of national biography] ought, in the first place, to supply you with a sufficient indication of all that has been written upon the subject; it should state briefly the result of the last researches; explain what appears to be the present opinion among the most qualified experts, and what are the points which seem still to be open; and above all, should give a full reference to all the best and most original sources of information. The most important and valuable part of a good dictionary is often that dry list of authorities which frequently costs an amount of skilled labour not apparent on the surface, and not always, it is to be feared, recognised with due gratitude.⁷

We might wonder what is implied by his phrase, the result of the last researches. Obviously Stephen was aware of the influence of historical scholarship and of fresh interpretations of action and events coming to light. Correctives to understanding emerge in this manner and the biographical entry cannot ignore this.

Stephen's words cannot apply evenly to all biographical dictionaries, but they seem particularly applicable to those scholarly, national compilations which aim to make an authoritative contribution to the knowledge and understanding of chosen individuals in the context of earlier times. We would have different expectations from works which are simply sources of basic information about contemporaries and which have no aims of scholarly analysis or explication. Whatever we might think of Stephen's words, there is evidently scope for more matters to be considered in compiling biographical dictionaries than might be obvious at first blush.

Parliamentary Biographical Dictionaries

Dictionaries of parliamentarians may be considered a sub-genre of national biography. Almost every parliamentarian might be expected to be later included in a national biography, so it is necessary to consider the relationship between the two sorts of compilation. Firstly, they aim at different audiences and each has a different focus. The parliamentary biographical dictionary has primarily an institutional association and a known group of persons, some perhaps still alive, to cover, whereas the national biographical work might be expected to convey a picture of deceased individuals in the round against an historical background. In other words, the institutional work is concerned with what might be a narrower range of personal information, whereas the national biography would have a broader conception of its task and it is open-ended in its coverage. Its level of treatment would possibly point both to the past and, with the benefit of hindsight, in

⁷ Stephen, *op. cit.*, see reference 2, p. 19.

some instances to the future. The more specialised parliamentary work would have the possibility of a level and depth of treatment which would be unrealistic in most national biographies. In addition, a parliamentary biographical dictionary has the opportunity to provide, possibly in supplementary tables, graphs and lists, analytical information, commentary and even interpretation, which would be inappropriate in a national biography. Special additional considerations arise if the parliamentary biographical dictionary is commissioned or produced by the legislature concerned. Political correctness and internal institutional considerations may play a role in shaping the work.

The producers of the Australian Senate's biographical dictionary will doubtless have given much attention to the work's objectives and what its potential readership (senators as well as the world outside Parliament) might legitimately expect. Consideration of what the present state of information and knowledge on its members is, and what is practical in cost-benefit terms, will be equally valid concerns. A working database will need to be built up which, like the tip of the iceberg, may be only in part discernible in the final published volumes. This unpublished material will presumably be data for future researchers and new reference works. The dilemma of what space to allot to entries will need to be confronted: should major figures, especially those who are already well researched and the subject of a biography, merit lengthy treatment? Of course, lesser lights, now scarcely known to the world at large, must receive briefer notice. But it is precisely such minor figures who call for detailed, if necessarily shorter, treatment. Balance of treatment and uniformity of method and style might need clear guidelines as well, especially if many different hands are involved in preparing entries.

The House of Commons 1754-1790 by Namier and Brooke contains a section entitled Method which sets out the principles which are followed in compiling that work. Of interest is the comment about length of entries:

The biographies vary in length, from one or two sentences to over seven thousand words ... Particular attention has been paid to second-rank figures, men who never reached the front bench ... yet whose names occur over and over again in the correspondence and memoirs of the period ... (v. 1, p. xiv)

Should a parliamentary biographical dictionary go beyond being a rather 'value-neutral' record of the existence and parliamentary activity of senators by providing some insights into the nature of the political process and functions of the institution itself? Perhaps in the eyes of some this is neither appropriate nor even feasible. If, however, the view is taken that the understanding of the institution is inseparable from an interpretation of the character and behaviour (political and personal) of the parliamentary representatives, there is obviously need for attention to far broader issues of context. This is a crucial point which needs close examination since it has far-reaching implications and contains some dangers. Prudence may dictate a course that steers clear of these all too obvious shoals, especially in works which emanate from the parliamentary institution itself. Independent scholars may choose to take quite different paths.

It is not difficult to argue a case for an undertaking that is either entirely devoid of interpretation or commentary, or one that squarely faces political and parliamentary realities. The former may be useful, and not necessarily easy to compile, but it will be limited in its ultimate value. The

latter undertaking with its aspects of political and institutional sociology, may be unable to avoid controversial aspects of balance and interpretation, but it promises to be fruitful and valuable in a way denied to the self-denying, more limited approach. It also promises to be closer to the reality experienced by the members in their own careers. It also recognises the undeniable fact that some members were of great importance in the extra-parliamentary life of their political parties, but played scarcely any notable role within Parliament. Is it proper to overlook such facts in biographical entries? Each approach is defensible; each has virtues and deficiencies. Perhaps there is a middle course available, but that seems less likely.

While the primary objective of a parliamentary biographical dictionary is not concerned with the character and personality of members, some such information may well become essential if we wish to have insight into the inner life of the Senate. This assumes, of course, that the work in question is not simply an exercise in image massaging. In addition, we may ask whether knowledge of the parliamentary institution is required or even expected in users of a parliamentary biographical dictionary. Few would deny that the lack of basic knowledge is a drawback if a full appreciation of circumstances and context is desired. Recent investigations of political and parliamentary literacy in Australia indicate that the national level of understanding is alarmingly low and widespread.⁸

Is it unreasonable to ask compilers of parliamentary dictionaries in Australia to give thought to how they might contribute to assisting the political and parliamentary educational task as a by-product of their endeavours? Appendices could be one possible place to locate such information without overloading the biographical dictionary unduly. Of course, entries should have indications of where further information can be found (such as in published biographies of individuals; where there are autobiographies available, this will be indicated, but some assessment of their reliability might also be included). These matters for decision require considerable professional judgment from the compilers of such works, especially if they are officially commissioned.

Michael Stenton, the chief editor of the *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* contributes Prefaces to three of the volumes of the set which are of relevance to points made above. While this work is based on Dod which in turn may, in some cases, have derived information from members themselves, editorial intervention has become necessary because differences in detail for long-serving members were occasionally detected in entries over the years. As Stenton remarks: More perversely, there are a fair number of earlier entries [i.e. in Dod] which are actually longer and more revealing than for the same MP ten or twenty years later! Stenton adds:

Dod supplies the need for a means of rapid reference to absolute essentials very well indeed, but beyond that the historian cannot expect complete satisfaction because entries are not history but pieces of contemporary utterance. (v.3, p. ix)

⁸ The publication in 1994 of the report of the Civics Expert Group entitled *Whereas the People ... Civics and Citizenship Education* stimulated much public and media comment on the deficiencies of political education in Australia. Comment focused on how little is understood about political institutions and the Australian system of government by a large number of Australians.

In his Preface to the last volume of the set, Stenton points out that the editors have added a larger amount of 'post-parliamentary' and 'extra-parliamentary' information, but have had to rely on published sources for this purpose. The details are consequently not complete and connections with interest groups or commercial bodies may remain unmentioned. However, these non-parliamentary connections 'may be at least as important as the more public ones'. Stenton also discusses some questions for further research which perusal of the four volumes may inspire. He remarks, for example, on the strong representation of railwaymen in parliament: 'thus this Biographical Dictionary, whilst fulfilling its function as a chronicle of Parliamentary membership, points beyond Parliament as well as at it.' (v.4, p. vii). The Australian Senate's dictionary staff might find further observations by Stenton worth pondering:

It would be a pity if this Who's Who were used only for reference. Even in smaller and more parochial matters of the Parliamentary stage there is some profit to be had in browsing through its pages looking for quirks of public life. It is, for instance, remarkable how informative MPs are about their membership of Parliamentary delegations. (v.4, p. viii)

All in all, his Prefaces can be very helpful to compilers of similar works and give them some points to consider in determining their objectives and where the limits must be set.

In 1991 appeared *Dictionnaire des Constituants 1789-1791*, a French parliamentary dictionary of the members of the National Assembly of 1789-1791, the first deputies of the French Revolution.⁹ The introduction by the chief compiler, Edna Hindie Lemay, gives details of the purpose and history of this two-volume co-operative venture as well as of its methodology. Mention of an Australian contributor, Alison Patrick of the University of Melbourne, indicates a local connection which may not be widely known. Entries follow an established pattern, setting out in alphabetical order of name, basic personal dates and family details, details of education and studies, career before 1789, parliamentary career 1789-1791, and career after 1791. Not all entries contain all these rubrics where the information is lacking. Sources and references are also indicated. In the section on the parliamentary career, there is a brief abstract of activities, including reference to the dates of parliamentary speeches and their content. This work, dealing with a short but very significant period in European history, has chosen a standardised structure and approach to its task of recording a considerable range of basic material. It is partly a ready reference tool and partly an aid to further research. It has a composite nature and represents an interesting variation in the field of parliamentary biographical dictionaries. Works such as this indicate how much scope exists for very specialised parliamentary biographical works, especially in significant eras.

The year 1789 is not only the year of the French Revolution but also the year when the First US Congress met. The *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989: Bicentennial Edition* commemorates this anniversary, but its coverage takes in the Continental Congress from 1774-1788. Like the British *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament*, the American work includes both living and dead members of Congress. A lengthy introduction by

⁹ *Dictionnaire des Constituants 1789-1791* [vols. 1-2, by] Edna Hindie Lemay [and others]. Paris, Universitas, 1991.

the Editors in Chief, both associate historians in each House of the Congress, goes into illuminating detail concerning their procedures and editorial policies, the difficulties they encountered with determining party affiliations in early times and on the ongoing need to verify and update information. Reliance in earlier editions of the *Biographical Directory* on 'family legends and personal recollections ... introduced dubious information' (p.2). The *Bicentennial Edition* has entries for 700 living former representatives and more than 100 former senators as well as each sitting Member of Congress: these persons reviewed their entries, so there is possibly still a need to be cautious about such entries. The Editors in Chief tactfully do not say whether any revisions themselves required 'amendment'.

The purpose of the *Bicentennial Edition* is, in the words of the House and Senate chairpersons of the respective Bicentennial Commissions, to 'promote a richer understanding of the contribution that the men and women of the Congress have made over the 200 years of national growth, challenge, and change'. (p. xi). Those words set up expectations which seem to go beyond the simply biographical. Possibly they are a merely a pious counsel of perfection which the work in question cannot reasonably attain. However, the Editors in Chief do point out (p.3) that the 'review of existing entries [from earlier editions] made clear the need for substantial revisions and additions in order to bring the new *Biographical Directory* into line with current historical scholarship and accepted standards of accuracy and consistency.' Here we see the same problems that Stenton confronted when drawing upon existing editions of *Dod*. There is likewise an echo of Sir Leslie Stephen's words.

It is not proposed to examine here sample entries from all these works although that is a job well worth someone's time. One entry from the *Biographical Directory* will, however, be briefly commented on, the entry for a near contemporary, Adam Clayton Powell (1908-1972). This entry of thirty lines (p.1667) is chosen because it highlights some of the shoals which may be present when contentious contemporary or still living figures have to be covered. The first thing that springs to notice is that the non-informed reader has to read down to line 14 to learn that Powell was a Negro: we are told that he was a co-founder of the National Negro Congress. Perhaps American readers would deduce from other information earlier in the entry that Powell was a Negro, but non-Americans might not be expected to be so aware. The matter of colour is an extra factor for US works requiring sensitive handling. Powell's exclusion from, and his re-election to, Congress is mentioned as is his important position as chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labour. He is described as 'a Representative from New York', but the word 'Harlem', so crucial to understanding his political survival, does not appear. The fact that his ashes were 'scattered over South Bimini in the Bahamas' has significance which may not be immediately apparent. Part of the scandal surrounding this member were allegations that he was a frequent visitor to this area in the company of young female staffers at the cost of the public purse. The entry has references to a book on the Powell case (*Rebellion, Racism and Representation*), and to what is apparently his autobiography (*Adam by Adam*, 1971). Entries such as this are to some extent 'in code': they cannot be fully explicit, yet they must indicate somehow that not all is quite as it appears on the surface. Entries in future presidential biographical reference works will possibly require 'coding' too, to judge by reports of White House activities in recent times.

Without going into further examination of the problems and procedures which the respective compilers and editors have had to resolve, it does not seem too far off the mark to observe that problems of the same general kind will recur in such works, whether they deal with the dead, the living or a mixture of both. This makes the task of compilation challenging, but the final word cannot be said at any given point in time. At this point it is appropriate to quote from *The House of Commons 1754-1790*:

Future research will fill in the gaps which we have left and may modify the picture which we have presented. No work of this nature can be final; though much is known, much is yet to be discovered. Here is a foundation on which other scholars will build. (v.1, p. xvi)

A Biographical Dictionary of the Weimar Republic's Parliament (1919-1933)

The discussion so far has touched on a number of disparate points, not all of which may be applicable to any one work. Most of them, however, seem pertinent for consideration by the compilers of the Australian Senate's biographical dictionary. In turning now to a more detailed analysis of a German work of parliamentary biography, we will find ourselves again meeting some issues already briefly touched on. Additional points of interest also arise from the unusual objectives of this work and the depth of research that has been necessary to realise these objectives.

The work's title may be translated as follows: *MPs: The Members of the Parliament [Reichstag] of the Weimar Republic in the National Socialist Era: Political Persecution, Emigration and Loss of Citizenship, 1933-1945: A Biographical Documentary Compilation ...*, edited by Martin Schumacher (1994).¹⁰ This work has now reached its third, greatly enlarged and revised edition. It has, in other words, evolved since its first edition in 1991. It is complex in its organisation, extremely detailed in its documentation, and is accompanied by a masterly survey by Dr Schumacher of the results of scholarly research into the fate of non-Nazi parliamentarians of the Weimar era. This survey (Forschungsbericht) is itself 105 pages long with double columns on each page. In passing, it is appropriate to mention that there is a parallel to this research report in the 200-odd pages of the Introductory Survey by John Brooke in *The House of Commons 1754-1790*.

As well as text, the Schumacher volume, which is the product of team enterprise, contains a generous number of photos of persons and places, and illustrations (some in colour) of material

¹⁰ *M.d.R. Die Reichstagsabgeordneten der Weimarer Republik in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Politische Verfolgung, Emigration und Ausbürgerung, 1933-1945. Eine Biographische Dokumentation. Mit einem Forschungsbericht zur Verfolgung deutscher und ausländischer Parlamentarier im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftsbereich.* Herausgeben von Martin Schumacher. Dritte, erheblich erweiterte und überarbeitete Auflage.

Düsseldorf, Droste Verlag, 1994. 187pp., 656pp. ISBN 3 7700 5183 1 [*M.d.R. The Members of the Reichstag in the Weimar Republic during the Era of National Socialism. Political Persecution, Emigration and Loss of Citizenship. With a Review of the Scholarly Literature on Persecution of German and Foreign Parliamentarians in Territories under Nazi Rule*]. All translations from the German are by R.L. Cope.

relating to the political climate (antisemitism, anticommunism, Nazi propaganda, posters, etc) of the 1930s. There are numerous tables and comprehensive indexes to facilitate use. The main body of the work, that is the individual biographies, follows the survey mentioned above, but pagination starts again from page one. These pages (from 3-575) are likewise in double columns with a rather small but still legible typeface. Obviously a considerable body of text has had to be accommodated by this device.

The editor, Martin Schumacher, is Secretary General of the Kommission für Geschichte der Parlamentarismus und der Politischen Parteien [Commission for the History of the Parliamentary System and the Political Parties, which is based in Bonn], a body subsidised by the State of Nordrhein-Westfalen, the Federal German Government and some other donors. The Bundestag has commissioned and subsidised the present publication which has a Foreword by the present President of the German Bundestag.¹¹

This work is unlike the parliamentary biographical dictionaries mentioned earlier in that its orientation is towards the members of the Reichstag who suffered persecution under the Nazis. But there is an entry for every member, irrespective of party or of demise before the Nazis came to power. In this sense it is a full documentary record of membership from the first postwar Reichstag in 1919 until 1933. There are entries for 1795 members in all, covering members who were Nazis as well as those from all other parties. But unlike national biographies and a number of other kinds of biographical reference works, the present work aims to present as full and explicit a picture as possible of what befell the members whom the Nazis persecuted. Remarks by Sir Leslie Stephen that ‘the writer [i.e. of a biographical entry] must be full of knowledge, which he must yet hold in reserve, or of which he must content himself with using to suggest serviceable hints’ do not apply in the present case.¹² It would seem that very little is left unsaid, but there are still numerous ‘serviceable hints’ for further research.

When the reader considers entry 628 for Adolf Hitler, he realises the full import of the work’s orientation:

Hitler, Adolf, born 20. 4. 1889 Braunau on the river Inn, died 30. 4. 1945 Berlin; Catholic. Member of the [elected] Reichstag March-November 1933; constituency 24, Upper Bavaria-Swabia. National Socialist German Workers Party. [membership continued in the non-elected Reichstag] November 1933-1945. National Socialist German Workers Party. Chancellor of the Reich in Berlin March 1933.

The Hitler entry above gives an idea of the basic reference structure chosen for each member: dates of birth and death, religious affiliation, periods when an elected member or, after the Nazi regime came to power, when a member of the appointed Reichstag, the name of the electorate represented, and profession in 1933. By contrast, the entry for Theodor Heuss (no.610), who became the Federal Republic’s first and very popular President, takes up four columns in small print. In addition to the basic data (similar to that in the Hitler entry), the Heuss entry has a

¹¹ Fuller details about the Commission are given in the review-article listed in note 13.

¹² See reference 2, page 26.

chronological synopsis of important events in his career, with lengthy footnotes going into particular points. A number of these footnotes refer to archival holdings of the Federal Archives at Koblenz. Footnote 16, for instance, is 22 column lines long and gives information about Heuss being fined for publishing three works without the permission of the Reich Chamber of Writers. Footnotes contain quotes from official files on Heuss and the information is far from cursory. Finally, there are two full-page illustrations which reproduce a letter to Heuss, dated 22 September 1936, with a strong warning about his editorials from the Ministry for Education and Propoganda, and a page from an official police wanted list (Steckbrief).

Entries for other Nazi notables (Hess, Himmler, Goebbels, Göring) are just as schematic as the Hitler entry. Their existence as members of the Reichstag is simply noted with the standard details supplied. But the main purpose of the compilation and its remarkable contribution to historical and institutional knowledge lie in the ways it documents the fate of those parliamentarians persecuted by the Nazi regime. These were mostly communists and socialists. Hindsight is very evident in a work of this kind and our knowledge of the course of events in this period lends perusal an extra edge. The compilers have brought together an astonishing record of fact, with very full references, which can only be described as exhaustive, scholarly, and appalling in the picture they build up of efficient brutality, murder and the practice of injustice under, or even despite, the law. The details are often highly individual and personal in a way that differentiates this work from the biographical works already commented on. There is much drama and suffering revealed throughout and in a number of cases one sees all too clearly the painful path these men and women had to go down.

Schumacher's compilation is consequently of prime importance for its insight into how the Nazis used their power, how they were assisted by the pliant, at times scandalously prejudiced legal professional and judiciary, and by the bureaucracy. In addition, the minuteness of detail in entries often provides an extraordinary panorama of how control over German society was organised. A complex understanding of the period emerges from all this material which is, of course, in addition to the often harrowing facts about what members experienced in concentration camps, or under police supervision. Curtailment of freedom of association, freedom of movement and practice of vocation, even for members who were not actually imprisoned at some time, are all recorded and create a picture which cannot be easily conveyed in words. Some photographs are also highly graphic in showing what awaited those the Nazis saw as enemies of their regime.

This work is thus not, strictly speaking, of interest primarily because of the parliamentary aspect, but rather as a major contribution to the study of an historical period seen through the prism of the membership of one important institution. Still, this is not to downplay the insights which the reader can gain on politics and government in Germany after the First World War. For further insights into the way the Reichstag operated after 1933, another volume, also published under the aegis of the Commission on Parliamentary Government in Bonn, can be recommended. It is a massive work by Dr Gerhard Hahn which places the history of the Reichstag Library in the institutional and historical context. It supplies rich detail and insights which excellently supplement the Schumacher volume: the two go well side by side.¹³

¹³ *Die Reichstagsbibliothek zu Berlin--Ein Spiegel deutscher Geschichte ...* by Gerhard Hahn. Düsseldorf, Droste Verlag, 1997, 759 pp. (Issued by Die Kommission für Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der Politischen

The editor's lengthy introduction, with its numerous analytical tables and copious footnoting, is the key to understanding the import of what the individual biographical entries convey in totality to the reader. The tables contain a considerable number of breakdowns of members by party showing how many were arrested, the concentration camps they were sent to, how many died in custody and where, the length of sentences, etc. Scholars interested in the history of German communists and socialists will find the work indispensable. Also important are details given of how the Reichstag in the Weimar and Nazi eras was constituted. After November 1933 the Reichstag was a one-party parliament, but there were some 22 members who were 'guest' members of the regime. The editor, listing their names on p. 41, notes that there is still dispute about this situation. One of these 'guests' was Alfred Hugenberg (1865-1951), whose press and political activities were so damaging to the young Weimar Republic.

An aspect of this work which has not yet received comment is the information it brings together on persecution of members of the German State parliaments (Länderparlamente) and of the legislatures in countries occupied by the Nazi regime. This additional information would not be easy to find readily and further assures the compilation of an important place in any reference collection on twentieth-century European history.

An enterprise as vast as this can only be achieved if the necessary infrastructure and expertise are gathered together and maintained. The creation alone of the databases of personal data, bibliographical and other references is a task which must stretch over years. Cross-checking, verification and interpretation of data also absorb considerable time. One wonders, for example, how much time went to visiting official archives in Berlin and Koblenz. The results are a tribute to the best traditions of painstaking scholarship and the search for truth. Depressing and shocking as the evidence and the fate of many individuals are, the importance of having an objective and exhaustive record of events cannot be underestimated. The possibility of similar works of analysis and record from other European countries springs to mind. The twentieth century offers, regrettably, all too much scope for them.

The Schumacher volume demonstrates unmistakably that biographical dictionaries are capable of contributing to scholarship and historical understanding in imaginative ways. Furthermore, the material he and his associates have amassed, opens up fresh vistas for further historical research. The work is indispensable to any library concerned with documentary evidence on twentieth century German and more broadly, European history. It is hard to imagine that its analysis and richly referenced material could be bettered.

Conclusion

The Australian Senate's proposed biographical dictionary is an ambitious project. If it is to stand comparison with similar products, perhaps some of those dealt with above, it will prove a testing exercise of skill. But there is no reason to suggest that it will be any less impressive than those

Parteien). A detailed review of this work by R.L. Cope appeared in *Legislative Studies*, Spring, 1998. The work's title may be translated as *The Library of the Reichstag in Berlin—A Mirror of German History*.

we have looked at. The Senate already has an impressive publication record to its credit, benefiting both citizens and scholarly pursuits in Australia. The examples of such dictionaries reviewed in this paper indicate that there are a range of possibilities in treatment and scope. We await the results with high expectations in the belief that the biographical dictionary should be a fitting crown to the Australian Senate's existing range of reference and historical material.