

cent. While fewer engaging subjects were referred to the committee in the mid seventies, apart from peacekeeping in Indo-China in 1973 which attracted a 76 per cent attendance and a review of NORAD which brought out 65 per cent of the members in 1973-74, there was a general shift in the committee's interests. Departmental estimates which had hitherto attracted a good turnout seemed less important now as only 45 per cent of the members attended, although 51 per cent of them participated in the questioning. Likewise, ministerial overviews were less well attended than they had been in the fifties and sixties. (See Table 11) The committee also had fewer substantive subjects on which to prepare reports although attendance at drafting sessions was considerably better than it had been in the earlier seventies. In all, the External Affairs and National Defence committee ranked 12th among the 20 standing committees holding meetings in the 1977-79 period. It probably fared little better in attendance since no party could muster more than half their members eligible to attend. (See Table 12)

There was, by the mid seventies, considerable disillusionment with the committee's impact among a goodly number of its senior members. In the first flush of more active committee work in the Trudeau period they thought that they would be able to have an impact on policy. By the mid seventies it was evident that the committee would have little, if any, more direct impact on the policy formulation process than it had had in the past. In March 1975 the Conservative defence critic complained about the Government ignoring the committee's recommendations while the prime minister was pronouncing policy on NORAD before the committee had an opportunity to make a recommendation to the House.¹⁸ Its chief aid critic tried unsuccessfully to have the committee share in the work of an Interdepartmental Committee.¹⁹ Another complained that the committee could only rubber stamp CIDA's operations without being able to change anything.²⁰ In fact, the opposition had a whole list of complaints. Ministers were accused of taking too long to say what they could have had printed and distributed in advance thereby depriving members of valuable time for questioning.²¹