

meetings of the committee, the Conservatives forty-one, NDP eight and Social Credit five. The Liberals maintained a fairly stable average attendance of sixty-eight per cent, considerably higher than that of the opposition parties. The NDP equalled the Liberals while the Conservatives had fifty-two per cent and the Social Credit forty-nine per cent. This was also reflected in the number of questions when individual NDP members averaged almost twice as many questions as the Conservatives, who in turn asked fewer than the Liberals. The Conservatives and NDP however, had more interventions than the Liberals, fifty-two per cent and ninety-one per cent respectively. But when it came to drafting the committee's reports, the opposition parties could not muster even fifty per cent of their members while the Liberals maintained their comfortable majority to avoid defeat.

In spite of the widely fluctuating attendance according to issue and party, overall the committee was in the late sixties and early seventies going through a very active period. Among the five most active standing committees it ranked fourth in the first session of the 28th parliament in the number of meetings held but second only to Transport and Communication in attendance. (See Table 9). Thereafter it sometimes met more often than the other committees but attendance was considerably less.

This decline in the External Affairs and National Defence committee's activity continued throughout the rest of the seventies, reaching a low of 41 per cent in the 1978-79 session. (See Table 10) When attendance was up fewer members participated and questioning was more and more dominated by an even smaller number of members. This was somewhat ironical since in 1969 the committee's rules had been changed to allow for more members to participate in the discussions by confining each member to five minutes. Instead of increasing participation, the ruling resulted in an average of three fewer members per meeting actually participating in the questioning. Even more dramatic, the number of questions put to witnesses dropped by an astounding 64 per