

During the 1963 to 1968 period there began a discernible increase in the committee's activity. This trend was reflected more in the attendance records than in the number of meetings. (See Table 5). Attendance which averaged 46 per cent over 14 meetings in 1961 rose to 63 and 74 per cent in 1964 and 1966 respectively. While much of the initial increase can be attributed to the interest of members in the 26 hearings on the Columbia River Treaty, which established a new record in the number of questions and interventions heard in the committee* (See Table 6), the substantial increase in 1966-67 can be explained by the reduction of the size of the committee from 35 to 24 members and a growing public interest in and criticism of Canadian foreign policy, especially over Vietnam, China, aid appropriations and general relations with the United States. In retrospect, this was but a prelude to the most active period in the committee's history.

In December 1968 Prime Minister Trudeau introduced a package of procedural changes that ushered in a new parliamentary era. The package was designed to streamline parliamentary procedures by shifting the focus of really substantive examination of the Government's policies from the House to the committees. For the most part the changes had more impact on the other standing committees than on External Affairs, which already had a tradition of automatically examining estimates and few bills to consider. For the External Affairs committee, the most important change was the additional responsibility given to it for national defence and an increase in size to 30 members. In the short term, the impact was not as great as might have been expected. The major defence items on the agenda - NATO, NORAD and peacekeeping - also had a substantial foreign policy component and the Prime Minister had made it

* Questions refer to substantive policy questions as opposed to procedural or supplementary ones seeking clarification or additional information on the same aspect of the subject covered by the original question. An Intervention is a cluster of questions or a statement on the same subject or theme that is pursued without any substantive interruption in the proceedings by another member. In part they reflect a member's ability to sustain a debate or presentation on a specific issue.