

Successive committee chairmen found themselves struggling with how best to apportion time between members who wanted to question the witness or deliver a statement. The five minute rule had not worked and the designated opposition critics resented being confined this way or being supplanted by more eager backbenchers who got their names on the questioner's list before they did. Each questioner was then allowed one question at a time but that did not work either, as some members found ways of stretching one into many questions. After much acrimonious debate that more than once kept a minister waiting for over an hour before he could speak, it was decided that an official spokesperson for each party would have fifteen minutes beginning with the Official Opposition's critic. Other members would be allowed 10 minutes and a second round was possible if the witness and room was available and five members remained in attendance. Quite frequently the chairman had to intervene after the chief critics had their say and apportion the remaining time among those on his questioner's list. This system worked reasonably well but there were still the occasional complaints emanating from backbenchers of all parties who complained that the rules were not being enforced as diligently as they ought to have been by the chairman.²²

Although the Conservative Government of the 31st parliament had promised to revitalize the committee, its tenure in office was too short to affect any major change. Certainly their members took the committee more seriously as 83 per cent of them attended, but fewer members of any party chose to ask questions. (See Table 12)

In the first session of the 32nd parliament that ran from 1980 to 1983 the committee once again took on a more active role. There has of late been a growing interest in international affairs among an increasing number of members. While some of this is a reflection of greater constituent interest and the need to find markets abroad, credit must also be given to the various interparliamentary associations that have taken members to other countries, introduced them to other national