EVERYONE has heard of the Voice of America, but the use of the plural changes the entire train of thought: In any democratic nation there will always be at least two voices—the voice of the government and the voice of the opposition. This is so familiar a phenomenon in the free world that it must seem perfectly obvious. It is worthy of emphasis because it is often forgotten that it has always been so; we tend to regard the confusion of tongues as more characteristic of the current scene than of bygone times.

The reason is simple; history emphasizes what was done, and what was said by those who did it. It spends little time on the alternatives which were not acted upon or on the utterances of those who failed to achieve their purposes; the pages devoted to minority opinion—that which did not prevail—are relatively few. Yet when the actions were being considered and determined, contemporaries heard both sides. Not infrequently the side which prevailed did so by a narrow margin; often the opposition was more stridently vocal than those who won. But since history gives short shrift to arguments that failed, there is the natural illusion, common to each successive generation, that the current confusion of tongues is new in the land; in the days of our fathers there was no such cacophony of voices.

Every student of government is familiar with The Federalist papers, essays by Hamilton, Madison and Jay, arguing for the adoption of the Constitution. They have been collected, edited, and are constantly studied for the light they throw upon the meaning of the Constitution. Even the Supreme Court has many times referred to them in its interpretation of constitutional meanings.

But who now refers to “The New Roof” of Francis Hopkinson of Pennsylvania? Who remembers that Luther Martin of Mary-
land called the Constitution a cup of poison offered to the states and said it forged chains for them? Who now reads Elbridge Gerry's "Observations on the New Constitution," Richard Henry Lee's "Observations of the System of Government proposed by the late Convention," James Winthrop's letters of "Agrippa," or Robert Yates' letters of "Sydney"? The papers written by opponents of the Constitution are seldom consulted save by historians with a highly specialized interest. In 1787 and 1788 the voices of opposition, of Patrick Henry and George Mason from Virginia and Governor Clinton from New York, were loud in the land. Opinion was bitterly divided. With failure, their arguments are relegated to obscurity. History attends upon success.

Men everywhere are familiar with the ringing words of Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." We know those words reflected a deep-felt faith; they were not the slick phrases of propaganda, since on an earlier occasion he had declared, "the God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." It was a lifelong theme. In the last letter he ever wrote he translated the majestic rhythm of the Declaration into the homely vernacular of the Virginia country gentleman: "The mass of mankind was not born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God."

These are the sentiments which history records. But how often is it recalled that it was said of this selfsame Jefferson that he was "the promoter of national disunion, national insignificance, public disorder and discredit," that he was the friend of anarchy, foe of public credit, enemy of the Constitution, incompetent in office, and a plagiarist? The militancy of his "atheism" was taken so seriously that, upon his election, some nervous people hid their Bibles.

We think of George Washington as the Father of his Country, whose prestige and integrity held together the Constitutional Convention, and who, as first President, took pains to establish precedents that have been authoritative ever since. Very few remember that it was a great patriot who wrote to Washington: "As to you, sir, treacherous in private friendship, and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you
are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have abandoned
good principles, or whether you never had any.”

We remember Lincoln as the savior of the Republic, whose
eloquence once moved men as does that of Winston Churchill.
The Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural are among
the great state papers in American history. It was not a South-
erner, but a member of his cabinet, who called him a “long armed
baboon” and a “great hairy ape.” It was a unionist, not a con-
federate, who wrote less than a year before the Gettysburg Ad-
dress: “He seems to me to be fonder of details than of principles,
of tithing the mint, anise, and cummin of patronage . . . than
of the weightier matters of empire . . . he is an unutterable
calamity to us where he is.”

It is not necessary to multiply examples. Men in public life
today are not subjected to anything like the personal vilification
which once was common. Character assassination is at a low
ebb. The current discord among the voices of America is the
normal voice of democracy. We hammer out policy in debate
which is sometimes calm, sober and logical, but sometimes strin-
dent, emotional and demagogic.

II

There is a second kind of discord in the voices of America.
Like the first, it is not peculiar to this nation or to our own time.
Lack of familiarity with the past is the only reason for treating
it as a novelty. The authentic voice of leadership always speaks
in terms of prophecy. It is not possible to rouse people to action
or to make progress toward some great goal of political or social
achievement by using dull and stodgy phrases. Often, however,
when statesmen speak on behalf of great aims and high ideals,
those hopes are treated as descriptions instead of objectives.
That makes an obvious tension between word and act—hostile
critics are certain to call it a breach.

Again Jefferson serves as an example. When he said that all
men are created equal he was himself the possessor of slaves—
human chattels. His beautiful home at Monticello had “ranges,”
partly underground, where they lived in quarters quite different
from his own apartments. It was 87 years before the Emancipa-
tion Proclamation put an end to slavery. Even yet we have not
learned fully to treat all men as equals.

Every eminent leader manifests to a greater or less degree this
tension—this momentary incoherence—between word and deed. Surely it was true of Lincoln whose fundamental policy was enunciated in the Second Inaugural, of which the younger Charles Francis Adams said with justice, "This inaugural strikes me in its grand simplicity and directness as being for all time the historical keynote of this war." Yet, almost at once, his policy of "malice toward none" and "charity for all" was reversed by the "wavers of the bloody shirt" in his own party.

This same tension appeared in our time. Wilson was a voice of hope to Europe; he was greeted as the greatest moral force in the world. But he was unable in his own day to match deed with word.

These and other statesmen succeeded in that they seemed to fail; they were indeed true prophets, for time has vindicated the vital policies they advocated, and largely fulfilled the great promises they made. The incoherence between word and deed was remedied.

That is the nature of leadership—to establish goals, having faith that time will reverse momentary setbacks. But political opponents will surely draw attention to the disparity between word and deed, and deny its transience; they will almost always attribute the gap between prophecy and reality to sordid motives, or incapacity, or some even less worthy quality. To the admirers of the prophet abroad, who do not have the opportunity to see how well or ill his deeds match his words, the voice of opposition seems like the tongue of slander.

These two manifestations of disharmony are characteristic of all free nations. However, when by reason of size, wealth, strategic position or other spotlighting factor a nation is under world-wide scrutiny, the effect is greatly heightened. Names which in less conspicuous situations would make only local news are blazoned in headlines the world around. Charges and threats which would be lightly regarded in regions where the protagonists are well known seem much more serious where brief press dispatches give false weight to words drawn from longer context. Only conflict is news, and conflict in a nation with world-wide press services is world-wide news.

The United States has found itself, partly as a result of purposeful leadership and partly in consequence of the logic of events, in an almost uniquely conspicuous position. Therefore, everything that happens here gets disproportionate attention;
this accentuates inconsistencies and incoherencies which pass with less notice when they occur in many other countries.

III

The kinds of multiplicity of voices so far noted are common to all free nations; they simply are highlighted in the United States. However, a third source of confusion abroad regarding what is said here arises out of our characteristic institutions. Certainly among the Great Powers, indeed among nearly all members of the United Nations, the form and theory of our government are unique.

It is a government of checks and balances—legislatively, the House and the Senate are checks upon each other; the presidential veto is a check upon both; and the judicial determination of constitutionality checks both the legislative and the executive. The legislative checks the executive, since it can define the powers of many executive officers, and through its hold on the purse can destroy executive functions by a process of fiscal starvation. The legislative also has a check upon the judiciary because, by legislation, it defines jurisdictions. The President has a check upon the judiciary in that he nominates the appointees thereto.

One of the profoundest beliefs of our forefathers was that as a government approached democracy it must set up barriers to hasty, ill-considered or arbitrary action lest it degenerate into mobocracy. Therefore, though they established each of the three branches with certain independent powers, duties and responsibilities, they also established strong checks and balances so that no one branch might become dominant because of its vigor in the face of the lethargy or inertia of the others. In fact, the checks and balances were so neatly contrived that it seemed likely that the machine could not run at all; only when parties came into being and became the energizing force was it possible to find any focus of responsibility. At best it is a soft focus!

Historically different departments of the government have been dominant at different periods. Certainly the Supreme Court in the days of John Marshall exercised a powerful influence; it has been said that he reshaped the government. In other times the Supreme Court has been a much less vital force. During the years when Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Thomas Hart Benton were in the Senate their voices were more influential than those of some of the presidents.
Two decades before the turn of the century the House of Representatives seemed so powerful and the chairmen of committees so dominant that a brilliant young scholar wrote a book called "Congressional Government." Its thesis was that Congress was "fast becoming the governing body of the nation," "the gist of all policy is decided by legislative, not executive will." "The business of the President . . . is usually not much above routine. Most of the time it is mere administration, mere obedience of directions from the masters of policy, the Standing Committees." The cabinet members "are not in fact the directors of the executive policy;" "all their duties look towards a strict obedience to Congress." He pictured the President relegated to a secondary position; he envisaged the Speaker of the House as the "most powerful functionary;" he and the chairmen of committees were on the way to constituting something like a parliamentary executive. The author was Woodrow Wilson.

When one reads that book today it seems at least as unreal as "Alice in Wonderland." With no change in the Constitution to account for it, there has been a revolutionary realignment of power in the Federal government. The stripping of authority from the Speaker, in the revolt against Joseph G. Cannon in 1910, and the emergence of strong presidents like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, reinforced as they were by the position of wartime Commander-in-Chief, tended to put the legislature in the shade.

Both Wilson and Roosevelt ultimately faced congressional revolts designed to reestablish legislative influence. President Eisenhower has a philosophy of government which makes him want to yield the point without a struggle; he feels that the division of powers is proper, that the Constitution means what it says, and that the President should not seek to be dominant over the legislative branch. But no President is likely to accede to the situation Wilson described.

As between the Senate and the House, circumstances have led to the voices of Senators being heard more often. The office of Speaker has never recovered its prestige; the size of the House has made unlimited debate impossible; it moves under rules so rigid as to amount almost to gag rule; the power of amendment and the scope of parliamentary tactics are closely trammeled. The Senate, on the other hand, still has virtually unlimited debate; its rules allow a maximum of opportunity for vocal
pyrotechnics as well as much room for parliamentary manoeuvre.

The Constitution gave the Senate an important responsibility in foreign affairs and the Senate has never been without full consciousness of its rôle. By one device or another it has often sought to expand its power in diplomatic matters. The Bricker Amendment is, among other things, one such. Every effort to make its weight felt more in external relations has given occasion for Senators to speak their minds with great freedom and with some color of authority.

Inasmuch as the President is elected for a fixed term, an adverse majority in either house does not affect his tenure of office. Senators, however, are elected for a longer term than the President; their own positions are often not adversely affected by a show of "independence." Furthermore, party discipline is enfeebled by the fact that Senators acquire chairmanships of committees by seniority rather than by reason of talent or political capacity or any other factor save survival in office. Consequently, they can speak their minds on the floor of the Senate, at press conferences and in speeches in a manner which may run entirely counter to the President's views. What they say might well, in nations with parliamentary government, be regarded as totally irresponsible; indeed it might bring down their own party government and force them to stand for reelection themselves. No such results follow here. With our tradition of the separation of powers, and in the light of our historical developments, Senators are not only wholly within their rights; their tendency to sound off is taken as a normal part of the "enlightenment" of public opinion.

When Senators occupy powerful positions, such as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee or of the Judiciary Committee, they have added influence. If such men say sensational things, their voices will be heard not only in the states which they represent, not only in the United States for which they have responsibility, but around the world. This may give the appearance of divided counsels, or instability of policy, or incoherence in political strategy to a degree which is unwarranted by the facts.

Evidence that discordant voices do not mean incoherent acts is to be found in foreign policy. The great historical lines of our foreign policy have stood rather firm for long periods of time. Secretary of State Hull said correctly that policy attained "con-
continuity of basic objectives because it is rooted in the traditions and aspirations of our people.” It has not remained completely unchanged, of course, but certainly it has not been lacking in coherence relative to the foreign policies of other nations.

In all the world there are few current foreign policies older than the Monroe Doctrine, or more consistently pursued. The word “consistent” must be understood in the context of relativity, for the status of Latin America has changed and the Monroe Doctrine has changed to meet the new situation. Moreover, different presidents have shown greater or less energy, more or less courage, keener or duller insights, in applying the principles of the Doctrine to specific cases where it was involved. Nonetheless the fact remains that the policy has stood for a century and a third.

Since the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817, Canada has been regarded as within our defensive perimeter, though sometimes for reasons contrary to those of other times. When President Roosevelt gave assurance in 1938 that “the people of the United States will not stand idly by if the domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire,” he was merely making explicit what had been implicit for over a century.

Since the diplomatic revolution of 1898, close association with Britain has been well maintained on the whole. The reason is simple: the interests of the United States are so extensive that we cannot permit any aggressor to dominate the Continent of Europe. In the twentieth century Britain has been the anchor nation in defense of that policy; we had, perforce, to associate ourselves with it.

Since the war the Marshall Plan and all the nexus of activities which have surrounded and followed it—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Mutual Security Agency, and now the Foreign Operations Administration—have been among the most consistent and coherent groups of policies in the world. This remains true without reference to party, to personal leadership, or to all the confusion of voices.

Beneath surface manifestations basic policy touching Asia has also been consistent. We long since determined that no aggressive power should dominate that Continent. The classic form of expressing the objective was embodied in two phrases, “the integrity of China” and “the Open Door,” one blocking territorial domination, the other checking economic imperialism. For
that essential goal we resisted, then fought Japan; for that central purpose we make defeated Japan an ally and continue to recognize the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa; for that we fought in Korea.

It would be folly to claim perfect consistency. The Battle Act, the Magnuson amendment, and other legislative excursions into the realm of foreign policy have been, like the Asiatic exclusion laws of earlier days, embarrassing and inconvenient. There have been more such episodes than one could wish. Irritating as several have been, relative to the great issues with which statesmen have been called to deal, they have been trivial. The main lines of policy have been clear, firm, consistent—or as clear, firm and consistent as politics will allow, here or elsewhere.

It is impossible to get many different people with many different backgrounds, all having the right to speak, to talk alike. The vital fact is that when the government has acted, its acts have been supported. One would be hard put to find elsewhere fundamental policies pursued with more persistence and firmness than those mentioned and others which could be named.

Is this consistency menaced by recent congressional investigations? The power of the Senate and of the House to conduct investigations is not novel; it has not been enlarged. Both houses of Congress have long employed the practice, which 70 years ago was described as a way to "superintend" administration. It is a principal means of exercising a check upon the executive and, for that matter, upon the judiciary, for Congress has the power to impeach judges.

In the present 83rd Congress there are currently being conducted or have been completed during its life no less than 39 investigations by committees of the Senate, 48 by committees of the House, and six by joint committees. They touch all kinds of problems, such as agriculture, Bureau of Standards, commerce, elections, disasters, foreign policy, internal security, refugees, alien property, military and veterans affairs, and many, many more. Only a few make the headlines, and they are frequently not the ones of most importance.

This form of inquiry often performs a vital service. The Teapot Dome investigation under the leadership of Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana was one of the most striking manifestations of the power of the Senate and was useful in purging our central government of corruption. When this committee's power was
challenged, the decision of the Supreme Court sustained the broad right of investigation; it is not likely to be questioned again, though specific acts of investigators may well be. Even so, such committees do not have some of the sweeping powers possessed by Royal Commissions in the United Kingdom.

Sometimes investigations are conducted with dignity and sometimes in a circus atmosphere. The latter is not a recent development; it long antedates radio and television "coverage." Over 20 years ago Mr. J. P. Morgan, then head of the banking firm which bears his father's name, had a midget popped on his knee and a news photograph taken. It was a breach of good taste and an unkind act; it was irrelevant, but nothing could be done about it. "Loaded" questions and gross unfairness to witnesses are old abuses.

Current investigations are not fundamentally different from earlier examples. Nor do they cow public opinion. Despite all the uproar about the "terror" created by congressional investigations, I do not know anyone with something important to say which the American people ought to hear who has been silenced by the investigative procedures; many who have nothing to say pretend that the reason they do not say something significant is because of those pressures.

There is nothing in the Bill of Rights that promises the freedom there guaranteed can always be enjoyed in comfort or in a serene atmosphere. In the long history of freedom, discomfort has always accompanied speaking on controversial matters. There never has been a time when there were not social sanctions against candor. But if freedom is to amount to anything, one must be ready to pay the price of freedom. When a man speaks out he must be ready to receive, if not to absorb, criticism.

Many of us wish that Congress would have more regard for its dignity and its responsible function and curb publicity seekers, bullies, exhibitionists and others of like kind. They tend to bring the United States into disrepute because the world is not familiar with this aspect of the tradition and history of the United States. While the American people are not completely aware of the details of this history, they long since learned to take these episodes in stride; they are not confused even when voices are shrill. We can only hope that as the rest of the world becomes more familiar with the United States they likewise will draw investigations into right perspective.
Three factors which seem to create confusion in interpreting the voices of America have been mentioned. First is the un-historical assumption that there was once a clearer consensus and fewer diverse voices. Second, tension between prophecy and current performance opens the way for charges of hypocrisy, often—indeed usually—unwarranted. Third, the separation of powers lets the President speak as the official voice of the United States, but permits members of Congress, who have only a party responsibility which is often more formal than real, speak their several minds as they will.

The fourth and final factor that makes it difficult for our friends around the world to hear the authentic voice of America among all the competing voices is our passion or genius, whichever one chooses to call it, for voluntary association. We not only have more telephones in the United States than all the rest of the world combined, we use them more energetically to organize new committees. Therefore, within the United States we have every conceivable type of pressure group. They are by no means mutually exclusive; people belong to several such groups. Many are "joiners" by nature or acquired habit and may be found in the forefront of numerous causes.

"Pressure group" is a descriptive phrase that often carries an undertone or implication of censure; it is a dog with a bad name. It has the same flavor as the word "faction" had to our forefathers. The makers of the Constitution, and more specifically George Washington, did not want political parties; they regarded them as factions, and, for that reason, strongly deprecated their formation. Yet less than eight years of actual operation under the Constitution proved conclusively that there was no means of getting up steam in the governmental boiler without party stoking. Therefore, within Washington's own official family the division of opinion crystallized on the one hand around Hamilton and on the other around Jefferson, and parties were born.

That was evidence enough that the energizing force for action did not lie within the machinery of government; it had to be supplied from outside. What was true when this country was small, when its population was dominantly of one racial stock and its range of occupations severely limited, was bound to be increased to the nth power when those situations were reversed.
The nation spanned a continent; Europe and Asia poured many millions of diverse stocks into the United States; the industrial, commercial and agricultural revolutions made the economic activities and interests of the constituent elements within the population infinitely complex. All these changes made more acute the need for strong energizing forces to drive the machinery of government.

That this country can continue to have only two major parties is due to their character. National parties are essentially federations of local parties without much effective discipline. Neither has ideological tenets which are consistent; many a Northern Republican was closer to the New Deal than many a Southern Democrat. Often tension within one party on some issue is so severe that it cannot be said to have a policy at all. On the so-called civil rights issue the disagreement between some Northern sections of the Democratic Party and some Southern sections is so strong as to produce a stalemate. There are like dead-center areas in the Republican Party. Before anything resembling party policy can be developed on most points, numbers of factions and group interests within the parties must struggle, if not for ascendancy, at least for an influence upon the inevitable compromise. The result is weak party discipline.

Another reason for slack party discipline arises from the fact that all legislators, whether in the states or in the Federal government, represent constituencies within which they live. Therefore, a man may have a strong political hold upon his constituency without reference to his party regularity. This is heightened by the habit of nominating in primaries; any individual may announce himself as a candidate for office and, if he gets the votes, can defeat the party machine. In many places personal machines are much stronger than the official party apparatus.

Loose party discipline opens the way for cross-party coalitions that dominate specific policies. One of the most striking illustrations is the "silver bloc" in the Senate. The silver industry is not great in size or in economic terms. But it is concentrated in a few states of rather small population, each of which has, nonetheless, two Senators. When that band of Senators stands together without reference to party ties, they can exact a price (literally a price!) for silver that has no relation to economics.

Even within groups regarded as having solidarity, however, there are likely to be countervailing forces. It is not true, for
example, that all farmers have the same interests; it is even less true that they have the same point of view with regard to interests which they hold in common. The differences between the Farm Bureau Federation on the one hand and the Farmers Union on the other sometimes seem about as great as between the National Association of Manufacturers and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The farmers must have a voice in America, labor must have a voice in America, the churches must have a voice in America. It is only by organizations uniting and speaking as nearly as possible with one voice that they are loud enough to be heard. But the voices of dissent are never still. The Congress of Industrial Organizations and the American Federation of Labor pursue some common policies, as in hostility to the Taft-Hartley Act in its present form, but they also press for separate goals. The churches of America are united behind certain ideas and ideals, but the Catholic and Protestant churches do not unite on all questions. Wherever one turns, whether to groups of national origin like the Poles, the Italians or the Jews, or to economic groups such as the farmers, mechanics or longshoremen, or to religious or to any other groups, there are always rival pressure groups.

From one point of view these rival pressure groups in several fields of action seem to add to confusion. From another point of view their net effect is to establish cluster points around which opinion can form. Thus the public may choose, not from an infinite variety of proposals, but among relatively few put forward in an organized and clear-cut fashion.

The different regions, like the different social and economic groups, must each have its own voice. Within the British Commonwealth the points of view of the dominant elements in South Africa, in India and in Britain on basic racial issues are quite different. Here, all these points of view are represented within a single compact nation. Our friends around the world will have to learn that the voices of Georgia or South Carolina on some race issues and the voices of New England or the Northwest may be quite different. However, short of a fundamental change toward a monolithic and authoritarian government (for which we have no yearning at all), there will long remain these contrary voices differing in their stress and content one from another.

The root of pressure groups is simple. They are essential; in
a country so vast and complex any point of view must be expressed with great energy if it is to thrust its way through all the other demands calling for public action and get a share of public attention. As a matter of practical physics we know that even great energy will not push a blunt instrument far through a dense mass. Therefore, nearly all the drives are sharply pointed. It is, of course, undeniable that the amount of energy expended and the sharpness of the point of approach are not an accurate measure of the inner importance or fundamental wisdom of what is promoted.

An extremely important point needs emphasis: not all pressure groups represent selfish interests. It is one of the evidences of the American genius for voluntary association that many aim to promote the public interest. The organization to support the United Nations, of which the late Henry L. Stimson was a leading figure, was a case in point. The recent Committee on the Present Danger was another. The list could be extended indefinitely. Any contemplation of our habits would fully support the observation of a European, nearly a century and a quarter ago: "If an American were condemned to confine himself to his own affairs, he would be robbed of one-half of his existence."

The change in the international position of the United States during the first half of the twentieth century has been so dramatic that it is an understatement to call it revolutionary. Through much of our history, it was possible to view our institutions, our habits, our traits of character as interesting curiosities; they did not have any vital impact upon the rest of the world. Now the world situation is so tense and sensitive that a small border incident between two of the newest and smallest nations occupies the worried attention of the Great Powers; the behavior of a group of war prisoners creates an explosive situation which could eventuate in war. Under such circumstances not only the activities of the United States but even its voices attract an attention quite new in the history of the world. If we have not yet learned to discipline ourselves to speak softly on matters which affect international policy, it is because we have been as lavish with words as with dollars; we have been as little aware of the damage words may do as we are overhopeful of the services dollars may perform.

Nevertheless, the voices of America are authentic voices of democracy. They are the only means available for attaining any
consensus in a nation of continental proportions, which reaches from the tropics to beyond the Arctic Circle and which fronts on both the great oceans of the world. There is no other way by which we may come to a common understanding and a common action.

The vigor, not to say the ebullience, of our people have always been notable. Over a hundred years ago de Tocqueville remarked that in private conversation "an American cannot converse—he speaks to you as if he were addressing a meeting." Today when we speak to one another with a view to determining our policy we sometimes sound as though we were addressing the world. As time goes on, world opinion will come to judge us more by what we do than by what we say in the course of doing it; and in turn, as we gain experience in world affairs, we will learn better how to talk with our own countrymen without needlessly disturbing friendly nations.