

Got Your Divide, Got Your Conquer

Nobody asked but ...

There's a popular behavior that consists of dividing everything in two parts. All people are of two kinds — those who like this behavior, and those who don't.

First those of ill-will tell us we must choose (why must we, btw?). There are two occasions: being judicious, sometimes it is wise to make a binary choice, and sometimes not.

Last week I saw a statistical graphic on Facebook. It was underlabeled and overinterpreted. Mislabeling purported that it was a showing of dramatically different rates of Coronavirus cases by Red vs Blue political districts. But how did the pollster determine which territory leaned which way? How many voters were in each district? At what level were the offices determined — local, state, federal? What had been long term results of voting, or short term? What had been long and short term effects of gerrymandering?

The graphic simply did not say, but complicated division was going on nonetheless — there was division between those who understood statistics and those who did not. There was division between those who understood graphic representation and those who did not. There was division among those who sought confirmation and those who sought information.

But why do we allow this kind of labeling? Those among us who are cogent realize that this is knee-jerk divisiveness that is second nature to politicians.

Now we have at least 4 wedges at work, coronavirus, government response to a pandemic (real or supposed), police brutality, and protest. Each of these wedges are in the process of spinning off new wedges, as I write.

But considering only the 4, that gives us the potential for 16 groups of sentiment composition (2^4). But journalism keeps drumming up new wedges which are surreptitiously ideated by courtiers in the oligarchy. The more division, the smaller are groups to be conquered. The more division, the exponentially more groups of minorities.

— Kilgore Forelle