

 **TODAY'S "SHORT TOPIC"**
POLARIZATION RESULTS
FROM CHANGING OPINIONS!
(but there's more
to it than that!)



By Stephen L. Bakke  June 1, 2015

Here's what provoked me:

In an earlier letter to editor I took the burden of polarization off conservatives, asserting that liberal opinions have changed dramatically. I also pointed out that conservative resistance to certain changes isn't necessarily always desirable! Following my letter being published, several letters were published disagreeing with me or pointing out other theories on "gridlock" – e.g. conservatives are "risk averse"; and, inexcusable intransigence and stubborn partisanship are causes for non-compromise. In my attempt to correct "misguided opinions" (Ha!), I submitted the following.

Here's my response:

Polarization Results from Changing Opinions (but there's more to it than that!)

On May 27 I took the burden of polarization off conservatives, pointing out that liberal opinions have changed dramatically. I also believe that conservative resistance to certain changes isn't always desirable!

Several letters were published disagreeing with me or pointing out other theories on "gridlock" – e.g. conservatives are "risk averse"; and, inexcusable intransigence and stubborn partisanship are causes for non-compromise.

There is a bit more to be said about polarization and its manifestation – i.e. the inability to arrive at compromises. It's not caused by mere stubbornness.

- Remember that Obama proclaimed his intention to create "transformational change." It's kind of hard now to deny such change.
- Compromise is difficult because we used to argue about differences occurring "on the same page," and a solution often was easy to see. But now, the magnitude of issues have grown to be huge (e.g. national debt, marriage, abortion) that we are now talking from different pages in different books located in different bookstores. Solutions aren't obvious.
- Polarization can result from sincere beliefs arising from cultural changes, new issues, and changing perspectives.
- New concepts are present in liberal/conservative debates. Those are "moral relativism," "situational ethics" and "nuance." For example, there is often a claim, usually liberal, that "there is no clear cut right answer."

Superimpose on those characteristics the basis for liberal and conservative differences: different definitions of equality; the proper role of government in our lives; and the role of the U.S. in the international community.

No wonder there's polarization!