Join or Die

by Benjamin Franklin
Cartoon in the Pennsylvania Gazette
May 9, 1754

This cartoon shows a snake cut into eight pieces, each labeled with the name of one of the colonies. The position of each colony in the snake corresponds to the geographic position of the colonies along the American coast, with the snake's tail pointing south and the head pointing north. The colonies, from tail to head (south to north), are: South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and New England (New England referred to the colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire). The caption reads, "JOIN, or DIE."

The cartoon appeared along with Franklin's editorial about the "disunited state" of the colonies, and helped make his point about the importance of colonial unity. At the time, there was a superstition that a snake which had been cut into pieces would come back to life if the pieces were put together before sunset.
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