

---

social service infrastructure is also required, with decent roads, schools and hospitals prominently included. Gender equality is an essential prerequisite. Education must also be universalized. And a growing economy producing benign goods and services with reasonably full employment is vital, not only because the edifice as a whole cannot be sustained without adequate economic resources, but also because unemployed young males are a menace and need to be distracted from their ominously mischievous diversions by having something more useful and rewarding to do. If such conditions are satisfactorily met, a radical politics can be avoided, and a secularized politics of compromise and tolerance – a politics of amicable pluralism, a politics, in short, like Canada's – will take its place.

I am going to call this the *Comprehensive Social Engineering Model*. Thus described, it is immensely appealing. It rests on a seemingly plausible set of empirical propositions about the sources respectively of good and bad social and political behaviour, both domestically and internationally. That being so, it offers – at least on the surface – a clear guide to action. In concrete terms, it tells us what to do. Because we think its applicability is universal, we are certain as well that our being wedded to it puts us firmly on the side of the good and the just, the side of natural law. Our allies, moreover, have also bought into it – although not all of them with equal conviction. And in the end, if it actually works, it will make everyone in the comfortable OECD world, and possibly elsewhere, too, much less vulnerable than they appear to be now to the violent predations of the fanatical and the furious.



These observations can help to explain – in intellectual terms, at least – why we are happy with where we are, and how we came to be there. But the model itself may ultimately prove to be much less attractive in practice than in theory. Some would argue that this proof is already in. Others would insist that the jury is still out. But however that may be, I want now to consider, if only by way of illustration, a few of the problems that seem to me to underlie the model itself. I do so because, if we fail to take them into account, we will run the serious risk of thinking far too simplistically about the challenges we face and how we should respond to them. Among other things, we may pay insufficient attention to the subtle nuances of the context, and to the confounding devils that forever lurk in the details. In