

stantial assets are now down to \$1.8 million. The organization can endure only a few more years of substantial deficit spending. The latest financial report records the organization's assets at just over seven million dollars, nearly \$2.5 million of which is clearly unavailable for ready use, in accounts receivable (two million dollars) or in property (nearly \$500,000). The NCC's accounts payable and accrued expenses, on the other hand, total a whopping \$5,289,885. The NCC is virtually bankrupt.

New revenues remain elusive. The NCC's largest member communions (e.g., the United Methodists and the P.C. U.S.A.), have declared they will provide no more bailouts. Donations from member communions are expected to drop next year. And this year's income from foundations now stands at less than half of expectations.

Edgar and other NCC leaders spoke at length about their recent visit to the Middle East, during which they were largely critical of Israeli policies, supportive of Palestinian goals, and uncritical of the Arab leaders whom they met, including the Syrian dictator, the king of Jordan, and the prime minister of Lebanon, along with Palestinian Authority representatives. Though Edgar and other NCC leaders lamented the continuing exodus of Christians from the Middle East, no one mentioned the possibility that Islamic intolerance toward religious minorities might play a role.

This shunning of reality was typical. The NCC, though likely headed for demise, remains blithely committed to the political and theological blunders that have already made it irrelevant.

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SOCIETY

Italy's Child-Abuse Lobby

by Alberto Carosa

Don Fortunato di Noto is a well-known Italian Catholic priest who has served as a leader in the fight against pedophilia for years, so much so that even *Newsweek* has acknowledged his

work in a lengthy article. As founder and president of the helpline *Telefono Arcobaleno*, he has forcefully decried the abuse of children as a scourge of appalling and increasing proportions.

Recent developments—including the self-styled “Pedophile Liberation Front” smashed by the police in Rome—have, sadly, proved him right once again. Yet there are still those who downplay this tragic phenomenon, either accusing people such as Don di Noto of being unwarrantedly alarmist or blaming the wrong culprits (such as the traditional family, repressive morals, or consumerism).

In doing so, these “minimizers” are acting as the unwitting allies of what Don di Noto has exposed as a powerful political lobby, protecting and promoting pedophilia in Italy as something that should be accepted as sexually normal in its “soft” or “nonviolent” version. Daniele Capezzone, a national leader of the Radical Party, has justified his party's campaign against the suppression of pedophilia:

Pedophilia, like any other sexual orientation . . . may not be viewed as an offense per se. It might become so when it translates into patterns of behavior which harm others. But the criminalization of a pedophile as such, as a category and not according to his possible violent conduct, is intolerable.

The Italian Senate has also lent *de facto* support to pedophiles. In October 1998, the Senate held a symposium that condemned censorship on the internet. Pedophilia was not condemned during the proceedings. To the contrary: The sponsors went so far as to contend that “being pedophiles, proclaiming to be so or also to support the legitimacy of pedophilia, may not be regarded as a criminal offence in a state based on the rule of law.” Alfredo Ormanni, a public prosecutor who is prominent in the fight against pedophilia, told the *Corrispondenza romana* that he was shocked to realize that “the attitude of many participants [in the Senate symposium] was not contrary to pedophilia” and termed Capezzone's distinction between violent and nonviolent pedophilia “appalling.”

Fabio Bernabei, who wrote the study “Does the Radical Party promote pedophilia?,” argues that pedophilia is always violent, psychologically if not physically. “The legitimization of sexual intercourse between adults and children,” he writes,

is a phenomenon with specific cultural roots embedded in the anarchical and anti-prohibitionist ideology, as part of a process of dissolution of Christian principles and institutions which relates to the profound behavioral revolution of 1968.

One of the leaders of the 1968 cultural revolution, German Green Party member and MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit, made international headlines not long ago for writing a book about (as the *Guardian* put it) the “erotic nature of his contacts with children at an alternative kindergarten in Frankfurt,” where he had lived and worked years earlier. After a public outcry, he dismissed his writings as mere “literary exaggerations”; in the 60's, however, children's sexual emancipation was taught among leftist groups as part and parcel of the wider movement of sexual liberation. “By the late Seventies,” notes the French far-left paper *Liberation* (February 23, 2001), “pedophilia was a welcome deviancy.” As reported in the *Guardian*,

Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and the current French health and education ministers Bernard Kouchner and Jack Lang were among the signatories of petitions in the 1970s calling for pedophilia to be decriminalized.

Amid a heated debate, *Liberation* tried to dismiss the pro-pedophilia campaigns by arguing that they simply reflected the “common intoxication” of the times. In addition, Cohn-Bendit has said that he has repented. Others, however, did not—in particular, Pier Paolo Pasolini. His recently published unabridged works include intimate details that he had previously omitted to avoid problems with the law. Pasolini may well be considered a pioneer of sexual tourism. According to witnesses, he was always on the lookout for children, especially in Third World countries, from Africa to India.

In a way, intellectuals such as Pasolini and Capezzone have played the same role as those who introduced opium in the 19th century: launching a fashion that was initially confined to certain elites but which trickled down to the more general public, with all its devastating effects.

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by George McCartney

Fateful Choices

Despite taking its inspiration from a feeble Philip K. Dick story, Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* is an extraordinarily entertaining film and, occasionally, a provocative meditation on fate and choice. As such, it improves upon its source immeasurably.

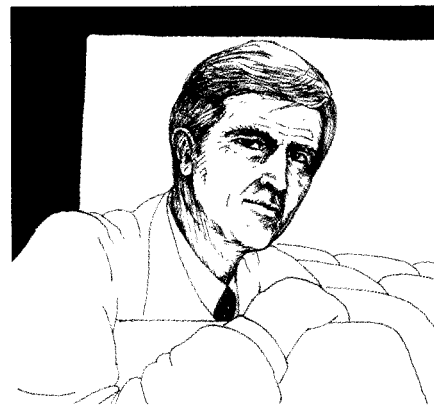
Dick wanted his 1954 story to be an Orwellian satire on America. Its premise, however, is so ungainly that it all but sinks the narrative. In 2054, American criminal justice has taken the next logical step. Cops no longer have to wait for criminals to strike. They can arrest them before they rob, shoot, or poleax their fellow creatures. How has this anticipatory police intervention been made possible? The Department of Pre-Crime keeps three idiot clairvoyants permanently installed on its premises. In one of Dick's few felicitous turns, these brain-damaged unfortunates have been dubbed "pre-cogs" for their premonitory cognitive powers, a label that has a true techno-bureaucratic stench about it. The semicomatose pre-cogs constantly babble about things to come. The Pre-Crime task force merely has to harvest and winnow their musings to discover who will be the next ax murderer or tax cheat. The would-be offender is then whisked away to a detention camp before anything untoward can happen.

Spielberg has cleverly reworked Dick's story, expanding its scope and focusing its themes. Yet he has unaccountably held onto its weakest device, the pre-cogs. Fortunately, he handles them with more wit than Dick did. His three seers are named Arthur, Dashiell, and Agatha (as in Conan Doyle, Hammett, and Christie). Following Dick's story, Spielberg keeps them floating in an amniotic pool of drugs and nutrients, the better to muse on the evil that lurks in the hearts of men. He tries to make the mechanics of this premise semiplausible by having the pre-cogs' clairvoyance limited to foretelling upcoming murders in Washington, D.C. Prudently avoiding statistics, he doesn't bother to explain how they could possibly keep up with a homicide rate as robust as our capitol's. With the cinematic bravura for which he's famous, Spielberg finesses the issue. Before the credits, he

plunges us into the world of Pre-Crime with an extreme close-up of Agatha (Samantha Morton), the most gifted precog. The screen fills with one of her eyes as she surfaces from her amniotic bath, her voice intoning: "Murder!" Next, we're watching her blurred, black-and-white pre-vision of a homicide in Georgetown. In 15 minutes, an enraged cuckold will take scissors to his wife and her lover. This is rendered in a fragmented jumble of confused images until John Anderton (Tom Cruise), chief of Pre-Crime, strides manfully to his monitoring station to make sense of Agatha's premonitions. He stands before a panel of translucent screens wearing electronic gloves with which he picks apart and reassembles Agatha's projected visions, bringing order out of their chaos. Once he does, he and his squad zip to the scene in what looks like a flying nautilus shell, arriving just in time to arrest the husband before he can dispatch the adulterers.

In the aftermath of this sequence, we watch a montage of slickly produced television spots assuring a complacent, consumerist public of Pre-Crime's essential benevolence. An announcer's voice, filled with high-grade gravitas, explains that, since the program was instituted six years earlier, every measure possible has been taken to ensure that "that which keeps us safe will also keep us free." This claim soon rings hollow, however, when Anderton returns to headquarters the following day and witnesses the pre-cogs' next vision. The projected murderer this time is himself, and he must flee his own subordinates.

Though *Minority Report* raises concerns about profiling and preventive detention that are much on our minds today, its real focus is elsewhere. The film comes most alive when it considers the ageless human longing to anticipate and, thereby, control the future. Caught as we are in the blooming, buzzing confusion of the immediate moment, who among us has not longed for such power? Who hasn't yearned to alter some moment from the past that led to future calamity? Anderton certainly has. His commitment to Pre-Crime is rooted in a personal tragedy that occurred six years previ-



Minority Report

Produced by 20th Century Fox, DreamWorks and Cruise-Wagner Productions
Directed by Steven Spielberg
Screenplay by Scott Frank
from a short story by Philip K. Dick
Distributed by DreamWorks

Men in Black II

Produced by Amblin Entertainment and Columbia Pictures
Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld
Screenplay by Robert Gordon VII from Lowell Cunningham's comic-book series
Distributed by Columbia Pictures

ously—just before the program began. He's haunted by the moment he let his guard down and allowed hazard to disrupt his dream of moral order. (What happened is best left unspecified here. Suffice it to say, it was just about as bad as it gets.) Anderton is convinced that, had it been operating at the time, Pre-Crime could have prevented his loss. He's now committed to using its resources to protect others from similar fates.

Motivated by his yearning to expiate his failure of vigilance, Anderton demands the impossible of himself. He wants nothing less than to invest the world with an inviolable moral order. To accomplish this, he's turned police work into a type of religious ritual. When he takes his position in front of the computer screens, he first holds his arms out stiffly in a cruciform pose similar to a priest's at the Consecration during the Mass. Then, as he sweeps the pre-cogs' images this way and that, his hands repeatedly come together as if in prayer.