

GANGING UP ON CARDINAL MAHONY

George Skelton has a column in today's *Los Angeles Times* criticizing Cardinal Roger Mahony because the Los Angeles Archbishop expressed disappointment with a Catholic public official, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, for supporting a bill authorizing doctor-assisted suicide. Skelton referred to the Catholic Church as "looking like an ugly old political attack dog," accusing the cardinal of violating church and state lines. Thus did he call for "a bill to reexamine the tax-exempt status of church property."

Skelton also said "the church hierarchy is on shaky grounds these days when lecturing about moral leadership." Assemblywoman Patty Berg wondered, "Why aren't they taking care of their own shop?"; and Nunez called the cardinal's remarks "extreme and dogmatic."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"Anti-Catholic bigots have tried before to strip the Catholic Church of its tax exempt status and failed miserably. But it goes to show how far we've come from the days when Mr. Separation of Church and State himself, President Thomas Jefferson, gave \$300 to the Kaskaskias Indians to build a Catholic church, to the bullying of George Skelton.

"On March 2, 2006, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial commended Cardinal Mahony for 'reinforcing the right of religious leaders to speak out on the moral ramifications of political issues.' The issue that Cardinal Mahony addressed then was restrictive immigration bills; he opposed them on moral grounds. So how can it logically be that Cardinal Mahony is now all of a sudden violating the Constitution when he addresses doctor-assisted suicide? Unless, of course, he's dealing with unprincipled persons.

"Cardinal Mahony is not going to be intimidated from speaking

out about contemporary moral issues. Those who want to silence him would do well to buy a copy of the U.S. Constitution. They may especially profit from learning about religious liberty and freedom of speech. Hint: they're in the First Amendment."