

The crisis drags on

By Robert J. McCarthy

WINSTED I HAD HOPED I could write something to the effect that the war was over but the scars of battle will remain. Unfortunately, such thoughts have been side-tracked with the granting of a restraining order from the Superior Court which denied the Board of Selectmen the right to vote once again Wednesday night on firing suspended town manager Wayne Dove.

If I understand the restraining order, however, it does not deny the Board of Selectmen the right to meet to reverse its intention to fire Dove.

If upheld, the injunction will take the matter out of the hands of the newly elected Board of Selectmen and hand it over to taxpayers to vote in a referendum sometime in the future.

The past month has been one of bewilderment for taxpayers here and for some members of the Board of Selectmen as well. The majority of people feel that elected officials sold them down the river when the sudden decision was made, after the election, that Dove should be removed as manager. The uproar which followed was mostly fueled by the fact that three selectmen did not explain why they favored the removal.

At least Mayor Bill McCabe

stood by the resolution on the firing which was presented to the taxpayers Nov. 18. The resolution, however, merely stated that the manager no longer enjoyed the support of the majority of the board. The vote on the resolution was 4 to 3 for his removal.

With the filing of the injunction, some individuals did not feel confident that any of those who voted for Dove's removal would switch their votes for retaining his services despite the outpouring of the citizenry for his retention.

I left Tuesday night's meeting with the distinct feeling that there would be a switch and that Dove would be returned to his job. I couldn't believe that the sincere comments made by so many respected individuals, in addition to a petition bearing the names of 1,000 residents, could be ignored by the four individuals who had voted for the removal.

I wonder what the outcome would have been if the board had voted immediately following the meeting. It is difficult to analyze what is going on in the minds of those who voted for dismissal in the face of the tremendous support for Dove.

What has transpired in the past couple of weeks in Winsted will be remembered for many years. I have never known such a display of citizen participation in town

business and I wonder whether it is actually fueled not only by events in Winsted but by events on the state and national levels as well. Political turmoil in Hartford and Washington is evident in our every-day lives and unconsciously individuals may feel more public involvement is necessary if for no other reason than to spread the message that "we've had enough."

Prior to Tuesday night's meeting it was reported that the four who voted for dismissal did not favor a meeting that night to reconsider because selectmen wanted to digest the information to be presented.

Wednesday's court action will provide selectmen with unnecessary additional time to digest all information offered at the hearing. The many speakers, and the audience, too, were well behaved and strong in their support for Dove. Two individuals were courageous enough to voice their support of the firing.

On the basis of that hearing, including the presentation of a petition bearing the names of 1,000 residents, it would seem there can be but one course to follow: bury the hatchet and get on with the business of the town. If nothing else, Dove deserves a trial period with the knowledge that he is under fire.

Here's hoping community lawyer Charlene LaVoie can appear before Judge Anne C. Dragoinis Monday morning to report the restraining order has been withdrawn.

A word of caution to Christmas shoppers: Be sure to lock your cars after exiting to browse or make purchases. A student lunch pail (who would want a lunch pail?) and a camera were stolen from unlocked vehicles within the past week.

Car thieves can expect a banner season unless diversion methods are put into effect.

Robert J. McCarthy was editor of the Winsted Evening Citizen.