Dispute Over Winsted Manager Flares Up

By ALISTAIR HIGHET

WINSTED—The tension between Town Manager David A. Maynard and Selectman Walter D. Miller erupted into open conflict this week, when Mr. Miller was refused a copy of Mr. Maynard's proposed contract with the town.

Mayor William H. McCabe and Selectman James A. Pettit have already seen the document, which, if approved by the Board of Selectmen in a Feb. 1 executive session, will assure the Town Manager a severance payment should he be fired.

"He showed it to Pettit and McCabe and then he wouldn't show it to me. He knows that I'll give it to the press, and he doesn't want it to be scrutinized," Mr. Miller said after a Monday selectmen's meeting that involved a shouting match over the proposed contract.

"He's definitely playing politics," the selectman continued. "He knows that he has the four votes that he needs to get it passed in executive session." Mr. Miller said, referring to Mayor McCabe, Mr. Pettit, Nancy P. Hubbal and Francis J. O'Neill," and he figures he'll keep it under wraps until then." On Monday, Charlene LaVoie, the community lawyer—who represents the residents—called Mr. Maynard's refusal to disclose the document "an outrage," since it was requested under Freedom of Information laws.

The contract, or "letter of understanding," between Mr. Maynard and the town has been a source of controversy since Mr. Maynard was hired to replace former Town Manager Wayne C. Dove in May of last year.

Mr. Miller and Selectman Brian W. Sullivan claim that the contract runs contrary to the terms of Winsted's town charter.

However, Mr. Maynard was hired with a promise from Mayor McCabe that he would have a "letter of understanding" signed and approved when he took over the post in August.

In an interview earlier this month, Mr. Maynard said that the contract currently being considered was less favorable than the one he accepted when being hired, amounting to 90 days' severance pay should he lose his position.

"It really isn't too much to ask in a revolving door town manager community, all I want is a little security for myself and for my family," the Town Manager said, adding that "it was supposed to be signed the day I started, and it has been six months."