Duke scores victory in Massport political game

(Continued from page 5)

the position. Reportedly, King would not tolerate a woman having the job. He forced the board members picked by him to elect another candidate. Louis Nickinello, a man singled out by the screening committee as being unqualified, Nickinello started at his new job January 10. His term of office lasted ten days.

During the last days of King's rule, the governor replaced two members who resigned after the controversial vote. He found his selections conflicted with Massport rules and quickly made two new appointments his last day in office. The next day, Dukakis used a little-known 1964 law to fire those two King appointees. Dukakis made his own appointment to the Massport board, and the new board voted to fire Nickinello on January 20. His replacement? David Davis.

Neither of the sides can claim to have noble intentions foremost on their agendas. The King team seemed to specialize in acting against the majority will. The Dukakis people try to gain support by pointing out flaws in their opponents. One Massport board member, a Dukakis supporter, had mixed feelings about the vote to fire Nickinello. He noted that Nickinello worked well with the staff and had some good ideas during his abbreviated time at the agency. But to justify the action, he added, "The firing of Davis should never have happened."

This boardroom drama makes for great reading in the daily papers. Yet with all the concern about who is in charge, one worries that the intended roles of Massport and other public institutions may be neglected. In particular, Massport, the MBTA, and other transportation-related agencies face issues with significant economic, social, and environmental consequences. They should concern anyone who commutes to school or work, looks out the window, or breathes Massachusetts air.

After his refusal to head Massport, Davis said he wanted the authority to get past "the political chaos it has been experiencing" and concentrate on its job of running the airport and harbor. Looking at the past months that may be more difficult than getting the Patriots into the Super Bowl.

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