

Principal Hissed by Students; He Halts Graduation Exercises

Stuyvesant Head Tells Class to Report for Diplomas and 'Lesson in Manners'

By FARNSWORTH FOWLE

A crescendo of student hisses that culminated in the booing of the principal brought an angry end to the 101st commencement exercises of Stuyvesant High School yesterday.

Dr. Leonard J. Fliedner, head of the select public high school for outstanding science students, called off the ceremony when more than half of the 700 seniors, according to his estimate, booed his announcement: "I will now present the diplomas, which some of you deserve."

For him, the climax had come earlier when students hissed his announcement of an American Legion citizenship award. He said he suspected this was a repercussion of the refusal of a Westbury High School senior on Long Island to accept a Legion award because he did not respect that organization's policies.

Others said the hissing had begun much earlier, although it became conspicuous at that point, and appeared to be directed at Dr. Fliedner personally.

It was conceded that disapproval of the Legion might have been a minor factor in the



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Dr. Leonard J. Fliedner
after he ended ceremony.

display, since Raymond Frey, 16, who won the Legion award, was heavily applauded.

Dr. Fliedner denounced the students for their behavior. He told them to come to the school this morning at 9 o'clock for

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BOOS BY SENIORS END A GRADUATION

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their diplomas and "a lesson in manners," ordered the band to play the recessional and left the platform.

Later, he said his remark about undeserved diplomas had been facetious. But, he added, a diploma is awarded for good manners as well as scholarship and character.

Stuyvesant High School is one of three limited to New York City students who pass stiff entrance requirements for its exacting scientific curriculum. The all-boys school is at First Avenue and Fifteenth Street on the East Side. The disrupted graduation exercises took place, however, in Loew's Sheridan Theatre, at Seventh Avenue and Twelfth Street.

Dr. Fliedner, in reviewing the incident, recalled that there had been similar hissing five years before when the commencement was held in a darkened theatre, creating an "anonymity of darkness."

Dr. John J. Theobald, the Superintendent of Schools, issued a statement saying it appeared the principal had used sound discretion in terminating the program.

Noticed Soft Hissing

Dr. Carroll V. Newsom, president of New York University, who delivered the commencement address, had left before the hissing became conspicuous. Dr. Fliedner said later that he had suggested Dr. Newsom need not feel obliged to stay to the end of the ceremony. He said this was unrelated to the hissing.

Dr. Irving Fischer, president of the school's alumni association and a vice president of the parent's association, said another platform guest first drew the hissing to his attention. It was then that he noticed soft hissing each time Dr. Fliedner spoke. He said he had motioned from the platform to try to discourage it, but without effect.

Dr. Fischer said he did not approve of the hissing but thought the principal's reaction was extreme.

Other parents were more outspoken. One said he showed a "latent hostility to his students that bounced back."

They emphasized that the Stuyvesant High students were "not a bunch of rowdies" but "the cream of the crop," academically speaking.

Dr. Fliedner said that about 99 per cent of the seniors would go on to higher education and that college scholarships awards totaling \$900,000 were announced during the ceremony.

Several persons who said they

were seniors but declined to give their names said the principal was quick to blame students for trifling misbehavior but begrudged recognition of their achievements.

Dr. Fliedner has been principal of Stuyvesant since 1954. Before that he was principal for several years at George Washington High School. He has been in the city school system since 1922.

On Dec. 21, 1956, a group of students demonstrated against Dr. Fliedner because of rumors that Stuyvesant athletic activities were to be curtailed.

Graduation at Junior High School 74 in Bayside, Queens, was disrupted last Friday by an excess of applause, not boos. The principal stopped the ceremony because some parents repeatedly insisted on applauding their children instead of waiting, as requested, until all names had been read. The pupils picked up their report cards and certificates informally on Monday.

The action of Abraham Kostiner was unanimously approved yesterday by the executive board of the parent-teachers association.

Last night, fifty-one students signed a petition apologizing "for those members of the class who behaved so rudely."