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His Viet Ties Cause Concern

Friends School Halts Planned Rostow Talk

By Jim Hoagland
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Eugene V. Rostow, a major policy maker on Vietnam, watched from the audience yesterday as his son graduated from a high school that withdrew an invitation to Rostow to deliver the commencement address.

Rostow, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, was invited last fall to address the 1968 graduating class of Sidwell Friends School, a private, exclusive Northwest Washington school with Quaker traditions.

But Sidwell substituted City Council Chairman John W. Hechinger as the speaker after some members of the Board of Trustees and the Friends Meeting expressed concern about Rostow's role in Vietnam policy, headmaster Robert Smith said yesterday.

Smith said the school normally invites the parent of a graduating senior to give the commencement speech and he originally invited Rostow.

But he reconsidered after the objections arose over Rostow's involvement "with a policy that tends to be repugnant to many Friends (Quakers)."

EUGENE ROSTOW
. . . watched from audience

The senior class then voted and chose Hechinger, whose son also graduated yesterday.

The change came to light when Hechinger, in his speech, praised Rostow as a "great public servant" and then said:

"I make no value judgment

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on this decision. It has something to be said for it, as this is a Friends School, the finest group of practicing pacifists and idealists that exists in our brutal world of today."

Rostow, the brother of presidential adviser Walt Whitman Rostow, who is one of the leading "hawks" on Vietnam, said school officials told him three months ago that there was some question about his addressing the class.

"They were terribly embarrassed about it," Rostow said as he stood in the school's cafeteria, shaking hands with other beaming, proud parents.

"I told them they shouldn't be, that I understood, and that there should be no friction at a graduation. A graduation should be a big family party," Rostow said.

Smith said the students had played no role in questioning Rostow's appearance. Several students interviewed yesterday seemed indifferent to the change, noting that both Rostow and Hechinger were well liked personally by most students.

In his speech, Hechinger called on the students to "stop hiding behind the shrubbery of suburbia or the city's outlying pleasant areas . . . and actively involve yourselves in the rebuilding and revitalization of the core city. America cannot tolerate cesspools of poverty amidst islands of affluence."