

OUTSIDE BIDDER IS LOW MAN ON SCHOOL

School Board Has a Stormy Session Over Bids on Omaha View Building.

Contract in Question Is the One for Heating and Ventilating—Plumb- ing Contract Let.

"Shall Omaha contractors and Omaha workmen be given the preference over outsiders?"

That question, in the face of the fact that an outside contractor was the low bidder, made a rather stormy session of the board of education for an hour late yesterday afternoon, and then ended with adjournment to Monday evening at 8 o'clock, at the special request of Uncle Bill Christie, chairman of the buildings and property committee, that he may have time to investigate and report more fully.

The trouble is all about the new Omaha View school. The board called for bids on the sewerage, plumbing and gasfitting as one contract, and on the heating and ventilating as another one.

The contract for the sewerage, plumbing and gasfitting went to J. C. Bixby & Son, the lowest unconditional bidder, at \$4,188, by unanimous vote.

But when it came to the award of the heating and ventilating contract, the storm rose. Lewis & Kitchen was the firm having the low bid, at \$11,375, but that firm is an outsider. The Omaha firm bidding lowest is the Johnson-Rowe-Palco company, at \$11,695.

Three members of the plumbers' union, A. C. Kugel, Henry Bidwell and John Harding, appeared, representing as they asserted, Omaha labor generally regardless of affiliations, to protest against the award of the contract to an outside firm, because it means, they asserted, that all of the wages paid for labor, and all of the profits, go out of the city.

Bernard Grunwald, master plumber, made a sharp criticism of the plans and specifications, asserting that the plant proposed to be installed will not sufficiently heat the building when running at its best, and will not heat it at all when the fans are broken down. He specifically detailed the weaknesses. He made especially strong objection to the fact that the low bidder was also the firm that made the plans for the plant, and therefore had the inside track.

Dr. Holoytschnor made a flight on the low bidder because an outside firm, employing outside labor, and as proof of it cited that the firm is employing outside labor on the Franklin school, where it now has a contract.

Member Lindsay made a flight principally on the grounds that it is unfair to bidders to permit the firm that makes the plans bid on them.

Members Kuhn, Kennard, Rice, Vance and Harding asserted that the good faith of the school board, to all bidders, both now and in future, is to give the low bidder the preference, even if he be an outsider, unless notice is given in the call for bids that only home bidders will be considered. A promise was exacted from Representative Cox of Lewis & Kitchen that only Omaha labor will be employed on the Omaha View contract.

Mr. Kuhn remarked that it was rather peculiar that no objection to the plans and specifications were pointed out to the board by any of the Omaha bidders until it was discovered that they were underbid by an outsider, and too late to be corrected without much trouble and expense.

Uncle Bill Christie spoke three times in his call for three days time for further investigation and finally, at the third call, Mr. Philippi spoke in favor of giving him the coveted opportunity and so adjournment was taken to Monday evening next.

Then educators, contractors and all others concerned wearily walked down from the fifth story, because the elevators had quit business at 5:30 p. m., regardless of the meeting.