

Closed clinic OKs appointments

By Karen Koshner
and Pamela Zekman

The Water Tower Reproductive Center, 840 N. Michigan, was accepting appointments for abortions Wednesday, despite a court order closing the unlicensed abortion facility.

At the reception area of the clinic on the sixth floor a guard sat with a list of names of patients and staff employees who were to be allowed in. However, the waiting room was empty.

At the door, a secretary said abortion appointments could be made later in the day.

At a hearing before Circuit Court Judge Richard L. Curry, the secretary, Joanne Thatcher, denied that the clinic's owner, Dr. Arnold Bickham, was continuing to see patients.

She testified that the list of patients and employees was given to the guard so he would know which patients had been scheduled for appointments. But she said those people were to be told that Bickham could not see them.

ALSO TESTIFYING was a secretary for the attorney general's office who said she had called the clinic earlier in the day and made an appointment for an abortion on Friday.

Curry continued a motion by Bickham's attorneys seeking an injunction to permit the Water Tower clinic to do business while the case is being considered. Bickham has challenged the Illinois Department of Public Health's authority to regulate, inspect and license abortion clinics.

The clinic was ordered closed last week by Circuit Court Judge Joseph M. Wosik because it had been operating without a license since Oct. 11.

One woman reported to The Sun-Times on Tuesday that she had made an appointment for an abortion to be performed Wednesday. When she mentioned that she was six months pregnant, however, she was told the appointment would have to be canceled, since the clinic will not perform abortions on women pregnant for more than five months.

STATE LAW PROHIBITS clinics from

Turn to Page 38

Closed clinic accepts appointments

Continued from Page 3.

performing abortions on women pregnant for more than three months.

In another development, Peg Blaser, Gov. Thompson's women's advocate, said she will form a blue-ribbon committee to make recommendations for correcting the medical abuses uncovered in the investigation by The Sun-Times and Better Government Assn.

Blaser said the committee, to be formed next week, would include representatives of abortion referral agencies, medical societies and women's organizations.

She said the committee would serve as an addition to the special task force, which is investigating the problems outlined in the Abortion Profiteers series and would "disseminate information that the task force discovers."

Meanwhile, state Sen. Leroy W. Lemke (D-Chicago), chairman of a subcommittee on abortion, said he will hold a second hearing on Nov. 28 in Springfield to hear testimony from representatives of several state agencies.

Lemke said he wants to question supervisors and employes of the Public Aid, Public Health, Registration and Education and Rev-

enue departments and the secretary of state's office.

Subjects of the questioning will be:

- Inspection procedures of abortion clinics.
- Licensing doctors.
- Ownership of clinics and referral agencies.
- Medicaid payment procedures.
- Tax-exempt status of some referral services.

Lemke said he has received anonymous information that some state employes may have received some form of kickbacks from abortion clinics or referral agencies. When pressed for specific information, he said he knew no names and finally categorized the allegation as "hearsay remarks with no factual evidence."

Nonetheless, he said he would question employes about the charges.

Lemke, who also held a hearing Monday in Chicago, said he will ask all owners of Illinois abortion clinics, the Illinois State Medical Society and the American Medical Assn. to testify at later hearings.