

Finley Offers to Buy Seals, Keep Club in Oakland

OAKLAND, Calif. (CP-AP)—Charles C. Finley, major-league baseball club owner, offered Tuesday to purchase Oakland Seals and keep the National Hockey League club here.

Finley said he had informed NHL president Clarence Campbell of his interest several weeks ago and will be in communication with him again.

The owner of Oakland Athletics also was trying to reach Frank Tatum Jr., secretary and director of the Seals.

Labatt Breweries of British Columbia said Tues-

day the company is negotiating to purchase the Oakland Seals' NHL franchise.

The Associated Press reported that Tatum also is negotiating with millionaire sportsman Max Bell of Calgary and industrialist Frank McMahon of Vancouver.

The AP said Labatt, Bell and McMahon have been trying for months to buy the Seals. It said they would

move the club, a member of the NHL's expanded West Division, to Vancouver.

"This is news to me," Bell, who is vacationing in California, said of a report that

he is heading a Canadian group to buy the club and move it to Vancouver.

"But I am interested that Vancouver get big-league hockey," he added in an interview from Palm Desert, Calif.

"If somebody is going to bring in big-league hockey, I'm all for it, whether it's Labatt or whomever. I think Vancouver is a big-league town and they're entitled to a National Hockey League club as quickly as possible."

A Labatt spokesman, when asked in Vancouver whether the present 14 owners of the Vancouver Hockey Club,

which holds franchise in the Western League, were involved in negotiations to buy the Seals, replied that a statement on this would be issued later.

The 14 Canadian businessmen owners, who include Bell and McMahon, were reported not negotiating "as a group" to buy the Seals.

The Oakland club is reported to have been given until May 15 to pay about \$700,000 which Campbell says it will owe the NHL by season's end.

Frank Selke, president of

Oakland Seals, said the sum owed is less than \$700,000.

Tatum said a major reorganization of the Seals has been under way for months. He said the club is trying to raise \$2,000,000 to pay the NHL and other obligations. It is reported to have a \$5,000,000 investment.

CANNON AT HEADS

"If we don't pay the NHL by the termination date, they can take back the franchise and we go down the tubes," Tatum said.

"We've got a gun the size

of a cannon pointed at our heads and the only way we can solve it is to come up with at least \$2,000,000."

The Seals, who jumped from the minor Western League to the expanded NHL last fall, got off to a losing start and averaged fewer than 5,000 fans a game. Recently, they won five, lost three and tied two and drew 10,800, 8,596, 11,201, a capacity 12,025 and 11,814 before they were eliminated from making the playoffs.

That increased their average attendance for 32 home games to 5,700.

Any attempt to move the Seals could lead to legal problems. President Robert T. Nahan of Coliseum Corp. Inc. here, said the Seals "have a four-year commitment remaining on a binding five-year lease. I talked to Clarence Campbell just a few

weeks ago and he told me then the franchise would not be moved, and particularly not be moved to Canada."