

NHL Absolves Oakland

TORONTO (AP) — The president of the National Hockey League said yesterday that the league itself is to blame for the lack of support of franchises in Oakland and Pittsburgh.

Clarence Campbell told a service club luncheon that "inadequate support at the gate" for the Oakland Seals and Pittsburgh Penguins should not be blamed on the cities but on the NHL for being "too casual in the awarding of these franchises."

But he defended the league's 1967 expansion to 12 from six teams, which did not include any new Canadian entries.

"It would be a great thing to have more teams in this country, but there are no cities other than Vancouver which are capable of supporting a franchise.

In Oakland, Seals' owners have expressed no concern with the attendance figures to date. To the contrary, they're optimistic. They're confident it's just a matter of time before the Seals get better backing.

After a similar number of home games last year the Seals are more than 17,000 ahead (50,522 to 32,779) of last season's head count. The club is averaging 6,315, against 4,077 for a similar span last season.

The increase started with season ticket sales which zoomed up 60 per cent over last year (1,712 to 1,085).

Campbell said the motive for adding the six west division clubs in 1967 was to avoid competition.

"No one said they were going to start another league, but there were two big existing leagues," he said, referring to the Western and American leagues which are the strongest of the minor circuits.

No further expansion was planned until 1972, "but there was a revulsion we felt regarding no Canadian team being represented, especially from the West.