

Selke Has A Hope For Better Things

By MICHAEL BENNETT

OSHAWA, Ont. (CP) — Frank Selke Jr., general manager of Oakland Seals, described the club's first year of operation in the National Hockey League as a disaster which got steadily worse.

"The owners lost about \$1,800,000 last year and things can't get much worse," Selke said Monday as 28 professionals and 12 amateurs held their opening training camp scrimmage.

"I prefer to think of the Seals as starting a year behind the other five clubs in the Western Division."

Oakland was in trouble in the first month of the 1967-68 season which saw the NHL expand to 12 teams. Minnesota, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Oakland and Los Angeles paid \$2,000,000 apiece to obtain a franchise.

Bert Olmstead, Oakland's volatile, hard-nosed coach, came out of the expansion draft last June with three proven NHL players—defencemen Bob Baun and Kent Douglas and goaltender Charlie Hodge—and an assortment of minor leaguers.

The Seals were in last place before Christmas and stayed there for the rest of the season, winning only 15 games. They had an average attendance of 5,622 for 37 home games.

While management borrowed

\$500,000 from the league and got permission to defer the club's assessments, the Seals continued to flounder. Olmstead told Oakland's board of governors in January he was finished at the end of the season.

Meanwhile, Fred Glover, former playing-coach of Cleveland Barons of the American Hockey League, was sitting on a park bench in St. Louis during the Stanley Cup finals when he decided to fill the vacancy left by Olmstead.

"I knew they had problems and I read all the stories about transferring the franchise to Vancouver," Glover said in an interview.

"But I'm not going into the job with my eyes shut. I signed a one-year contract and moved my family to Oakland.

"We've got a lot of competition for fan support from professional football, baseball and basketball. All I have to do is put together a colorful, winning hockey club and I think I can do it."

Glover picked up a defenceman (Carol Vadnais) from Montreal Canadiens in this year's draft and bought left-wing Len Ronson and penalty-killer Bryan Watson from the defending Stanley Cup champions. Ronson scored 45 goals last year with San Diego Gulls in the Western Hockey League.

Douglas had gone to Detroit

early last season in a trade involving Red Wing defenceman Bert Marshall and Ted Hampson. Baun joined the Red Wings this year in a deal for left winger Gary Jarrett, right winger Doug Roberts, defenceman Howie Young and the rights to goalie Chris Worthy, who played for Flin Flon Bombers in the Western Canada Junior Hockey League last year.

The 40-year-old coach gave up veterans Alain Caron and Wally Boyer to reclaim right winger Norm Ferguson and defenceman Stan Fuller, both 23, from the Canadiens. Both played for Glover in Cleveland and Ferguson had 42 goals and 33 assists last season.

BURNS GOES EAST

Charlie Burns, a centre with whom Oakland's sparse crowds could identify because of his years with San Francisco Seals of the WHL, was lost to Pittsburgh Penguins in the draft.

Although bolstered by a reorganization of the club's ownership structure, the Seals have yet to sign a player to a 1968-69 contract and Selke doesn't even know if left-winger George Konik and Young are going to show up at the camp.

Konik, obtained from Pittsburgh, turned down an earlier proposal and threatened to retire.

Meanwhile, Young sent back his contract unopened.