

rebut v.t. force back; refute. rebuttal n.

REBUTTAL

Elieff is no angel



JEFF SCHLEMMER is a London lawyer.

Rory Leishman may not like the Ontario Human Rights Commission, but he should not paint Elijah Elieff as a victim.

By Jeff Schlemmer

Regarding Rory Leishman's column, *An oppressive, perverse act*, (Sept. 22) about London landlord Elijah Elieff.

I acted against Elieff when he owned the apartments on Cheyenne Avenue. I was astonished by Leishman's statement that Elieff "could not afford to prevent (the buildings) from deteriorating into a filthy cockroach-infested mess."

The Cheyenne apartments were an appalling mess because Elieff refused to do adequate maintenance. I cannot imagine where Leishman obtained his information, unless he simply accepted Elieff and Elieff's employees' version of events. If Leishman saw the reports about Cheyenne apartments from *The Free Press* of the day he might recall Elieff was a notorious slumlord.

Certainly Elieff could have afforded to maintain his buildings. The Rent Control Act allows landlords to increase rents to carry out repairs. Any reputable property manager will tell you money must be spent on upkeep.

From the outset, Elieff refused to spend enough and the buildings fell apart. Elieff's aversion to maintenance ran so deep that when the plumbing broke, he left the lower floor flooded with raw sewage for months before the health authorities forced him to clean it up.

DISOBEDIENCE: Elieff repeatedly refused to obey the Landlord & Tenant Act and was therefore in the courts. We still have the court document on which he wrote extensive profanity, leaving little doubt what he thought of the London courts.

He was equally contemptuous of his tenants (and has yet to pay an outstanding order owed to the tenants). He fought the city, the health unit and the fire department over violations of health and safety laws. He repeatedly left his tenants without heat or utilities.

His tenants, many of them immigrants, suffered until Reverend Susan Eagle took up their cause and the various law enforcement agencies eventually forced Elieff to obey the law. For instance, London's bylaw on utilities cut-off was created in response to utilities shut-offs his apartments.

Elieff was successful before the Human Rights Commission because it found he treated his tenants abominably regardless of race. That does not make Elieff a victim.

The real tragedy of the decision is the apparent finding that if a person is nasty to everyone then it's okay to make remarks, such as the one about pigs from jungles quoted in your paper.

Leishman may not like the Ontario Human Rights Commission, but he should not try to paint Elieff as the victim in the Cheyenne apartment debacle.

Elieff obstinately chose to make his

CHEYENNE CHRONOLOGY:

1989: Landlord Elijah Elieff ordered to have his buildings on Cheyenne Avenue sprayed for cockroaches

1990: A tenant files a complaint against Elieff with the Ontario Human Rights Commission

1992: Elieff complies with order to clear blockage causing sewage floods in basement

1993: Elieff relinquishes control of the buildings

1994: Ontario Human Rights Commission board of inquiry finds Elieff did not discriminate against Asian tenants