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CHEYENNE APARTMENTS

Tenants fight back

London's race relations committee is to help Asian renters determine if they have a human rights complaint.

By Greg Van Moorsel
The London Free Press

Asian immigrants hoping to counter insulting remarks by their London landlord may have to take the first step.

A complaint about Elijah Elieff's comments will be referred to the city's race relations committee by Ward 3 Aldermen Pat O'Brien and Bernie MacDonald, but the fledgling group has limited power to act.

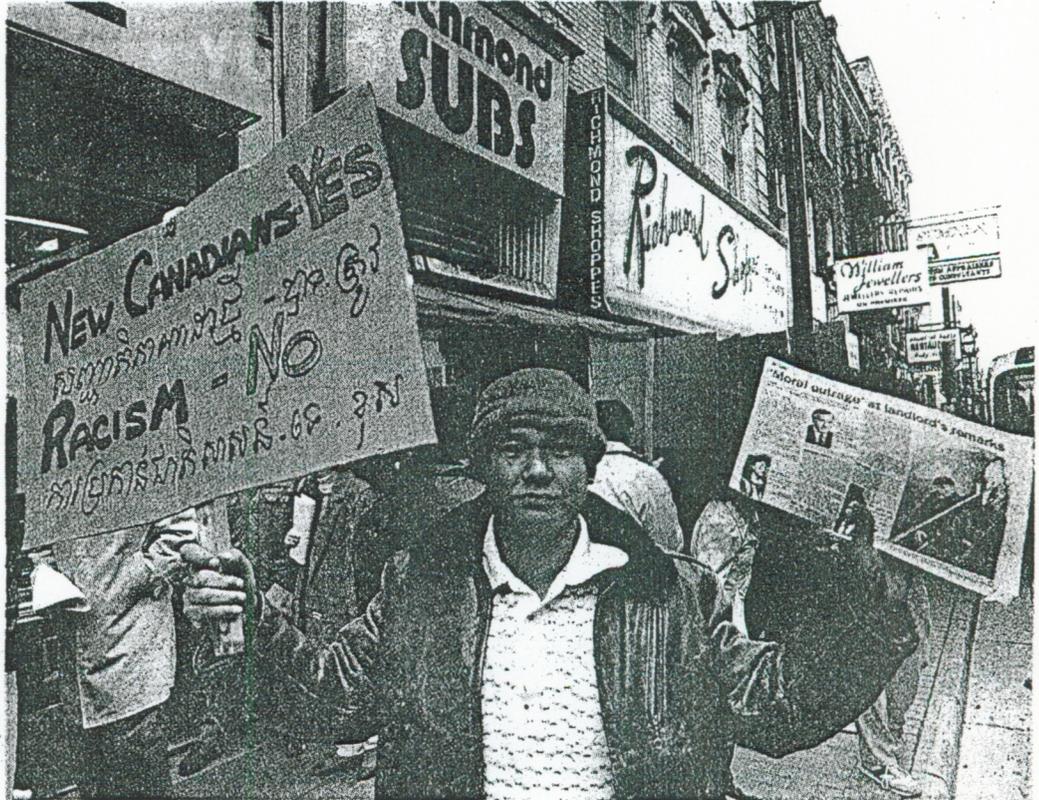
NO POWER: "We're in kind of a delicate position," committee chairman Gretta Grant said Thursday. "We have no power to adjudicate complaints on our own."

Grant said the committee, set up earlier this year, can investigate charges of discrimination and try to promote racial tolerance, but any appeal for action to the Ontario Human Rights Commission must be filed by the offended persons or groups.

The committee "would certainly" help Asian tenants in Elieff's Cheyenne Avenue apartments to determine if they have grounds for a human rights complaint, but "we aren't there to decide if they have a good case."

PROTEST MARCH: Earlier Thursday, outraged tenants — mainly Cambodians — marched with supporters outside Elieff's downtown restaurant to protest remarks he made in a Free Press story likening them to "pigs" from a "jungle."

Carrying signs in English and Cambodian, the group of about 50 protesters paraded outside Richmond Subs while Elieff's son, 21-



Ed Heal/The London Free Press

Bunly Sor, 40, who lives at 95 Cheyenne Ave., was one of about 50 protesters who picketed Richmond Subs, owned by Elijah Elieff who also owns apartments at 95 and 105 Cheyenne Ave. The demonstrators were protesting the condition of the apartments and insulting remarks by Elieff.

year-old Zoranco, angrily looked on.

"What's all this racism garbage?" he demanded of a reporter. "What do these people think they're up to?"

The protesters later gathered for a city hall news conference, where MacDonald urged Elieff to make "an open apology" to his tenants and O'Brien denounced the landlord's "chronic" history of substandard housing.

UNACCEPTABLE: Rev. Susan Eagle, a United Church minister who helped organize the protest, said it

is "simply unacceptable" that Elieff takes out problems on tenants, blaming them for the poor condition of his property.

Cambodians in the audience nodded in silent agreement.

Elieff, fined \$1,000 last year for not complying with city-ordered building repairs, was convicted on two counts of the same offence Monday and fined \$6,000. He was

given 15 days to pay but has vowed he won't.

NEED COUNSELLING: O'Brien said he is confident the city will find members of the Cambodian community willing to file a human rights complaint if needed. "They have to be counselled, there has to be grounds for a complaint and they have to be shown how to do it — I don't think that's a problem."

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□ A reporter and photographer toured common areas at the Cheyenne Apartments with owner Elijah Elieff.