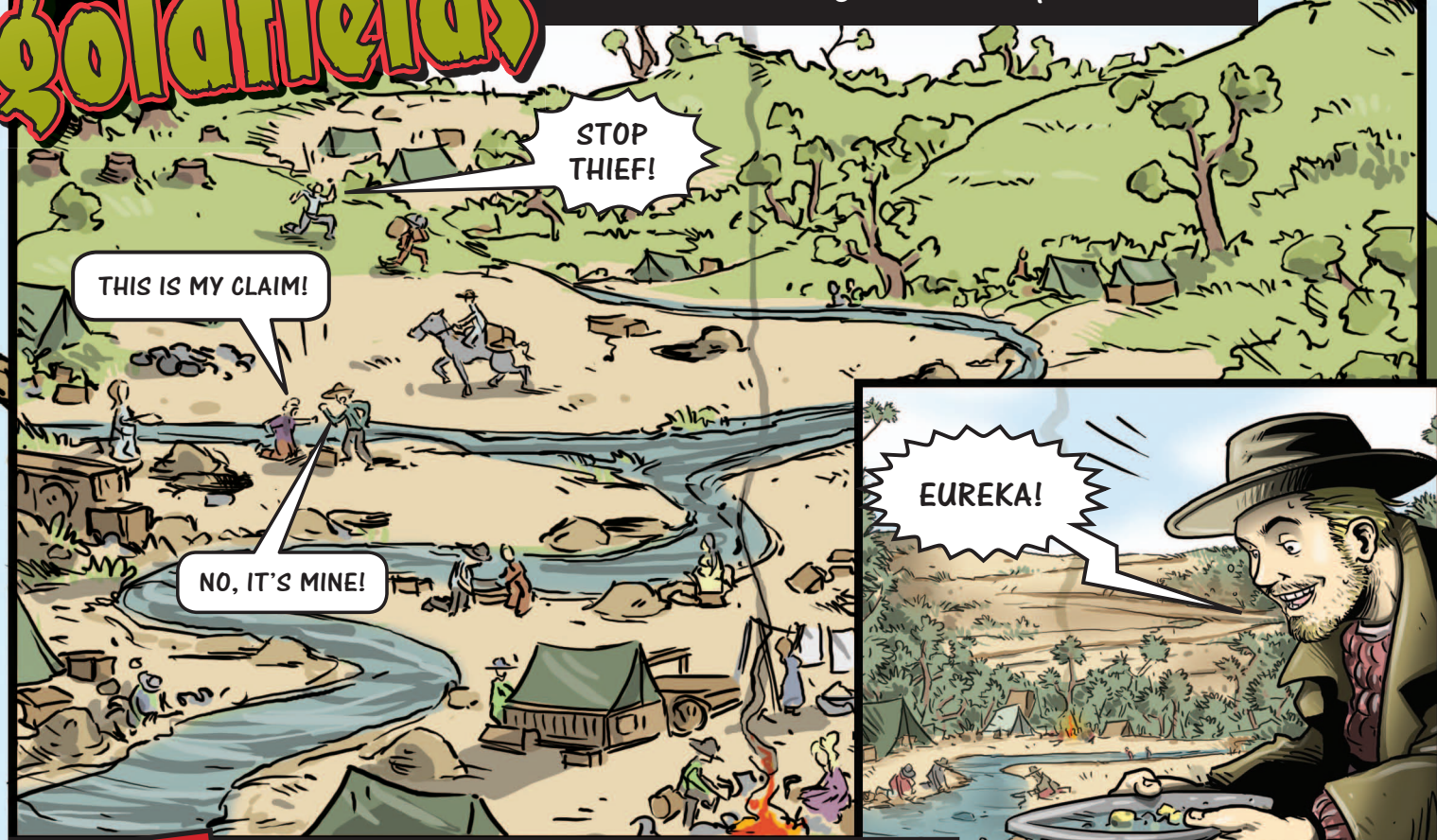


Trouble on the goldfields

August 1851

In the early days of the gold rush, the Victorian goldfields were rough and lawless places.

Menu



THIS IS MY CLAIM!

STOP THIEF!

NO, IT'S MINE!

EUREKA!

1 September 1851

To bring law and order to the goldfields, Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe drew up a set of rules, which were displayed at the diggings.

RULES FOR THE DIGGINGS

- No mining on Sundays
- One claim only per miner
- No alcohol on the diggings
- Every miner must buy a licence to dig for gold
- Licences cost 30 shillings per month
- Licences must be carried at all times
- Penalty £5 fine or prison

By order
Governor
La Trobe

THAT'S TOO MUCH!

A WEEK'S WAGES?
I'M NOT BUYING A LICENCE!

Thirty shillings (\$3) was a lot of money. A £5 (\$10) fine was more than most diggers could afford.

Governor La Trobe sent gold commissioners and squads of troopers to the goldfields to make sure the miners obeyed the rules.

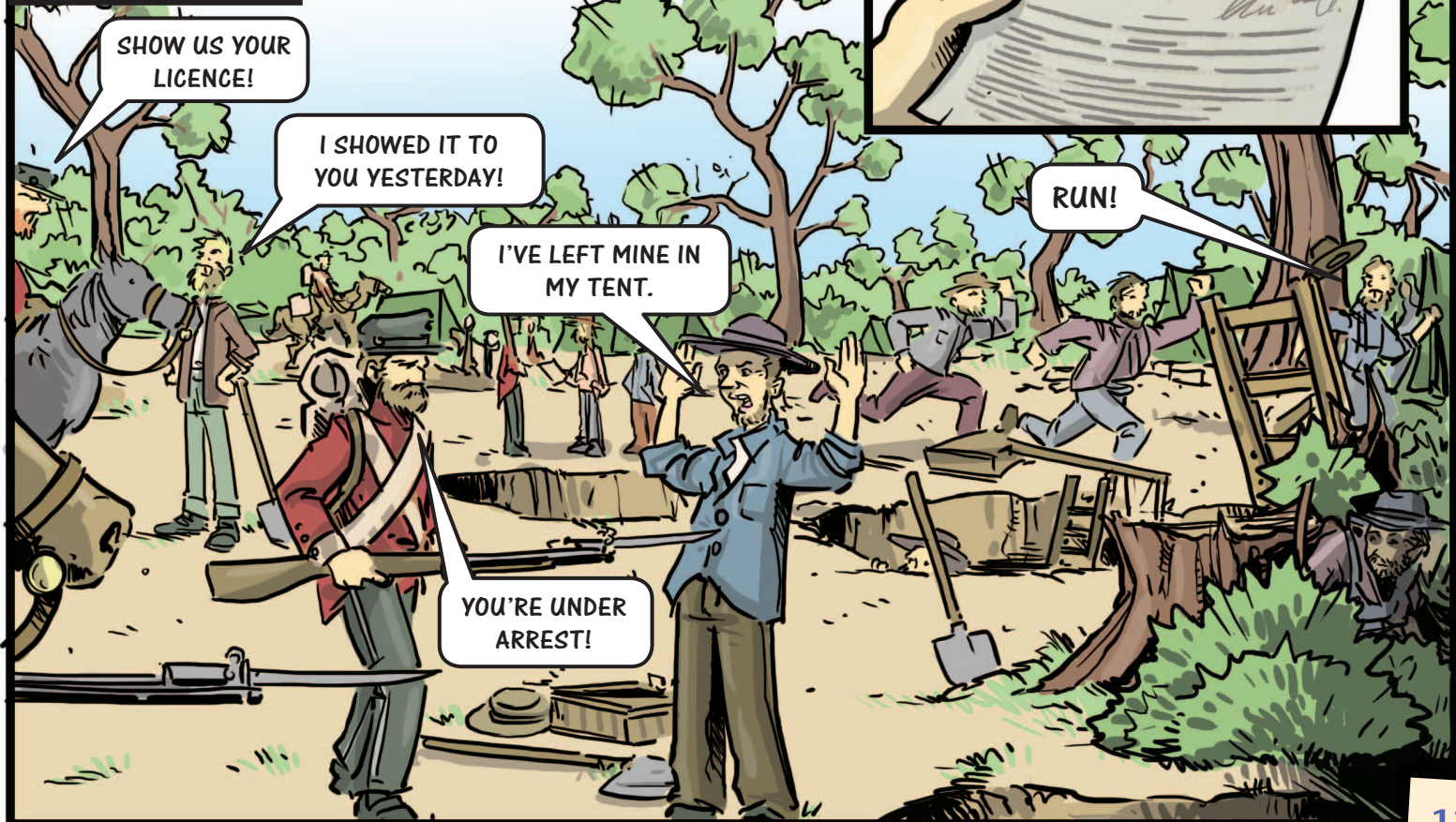


SEARCH THE DIGGINGS, MEN. ARREST ANY MINERS WITHOUT A LICENCE.

YES, SIR!



On the diggings...



SHOW US YOUR LICENCE!

I SHOWED IT TO YOU YESTERDAY!

I'VE LEFT MINE IN MY TENT.

RUN!

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

The rules helped keep law and order on the diggings, but the miners hated the troopers...

HEY, ISN'T THAT BILL O'CONNOR, THE EX-CONVICT?

YEAH! WHAT'S HE DOING IN A TROOPER'S UNIFORM?

THEY'LL TAKE ANYONE THEY CAN GET. HE'S A BRUTE.

NEXT TIME, YOU WON'T TRY TO HIDE.

...and they hated having to buy a licence every month.

I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD, BUT I STILL HAVE TO PAY FOR A LICENCE.

IT'S NOT FAIR.

I WAITED ALL DAY TO BUY A LICENCE. WHEN I GOT BACK, MY TENT HAD BEEN ROBBED.

THEY LOCKED ME UP FOR A WEEK AND FINED ME £5. NOW I'M BROKE.

Menu

Life was getting even harder on the Victorian goldfields.

YOU HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD? DIG DEEPER!

WE'RE ALREADY 40 METRES DOWN. THE MINE WILL FLOOD!

I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD IN WEEKS AND MY LICENCE FEE IS DUE AGAIN.

IT'S UNFAIR.

WE DIDN'T MAKE THE LAWS, SO WE HAVE NO SAY...

July 1853

Across Victoria, groups of miners began to protest. At the Bendigo diggings...

VOTES FOR MINERS!

WEAR THIS RED RIBBON TO SHOW YOUR OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S LICENCE LAW!

JUSTICE!

CHEAPER LICENCES!

WE'LL SEND A LETTER OF OUR DEMANDS TO LA TROBE!

1 August 1853

Governor La Trobe's office, Melbourne

SIR, A LETTER FOR YOU, FROM BENDIGO.

THERE'S UNREST ON THOSE DIGGINGS.

YES, SIR. HUNDREDS OF MINERS ARE WEARING THE RED RIBBON.

OH NO...

...much ill feeling... amongst the diggers against the Government... thirty shillings a month is unjust because the successful and unsuccessful digger are assessed in the same (way)... (we ask) that the licence fee be reduced to ten shillings a month...

THE MINERS WANT LOWER LICENCE FEES. THEY ALSO WANT THE VOTE?

TELL THEM NO!

YES, SIR.

I DON'T WANT TROUBLE... BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

The Bendigo miners formed a protest group named the Red Ribbon Movement. Ten thousand diggers joined, but the Governor did not change his mind. Then, in May 1854, Governor La Trobe resigned and returned to England after his wife, Sophie, became ill.

Menu

June 1854

Sir Charles Hotham replaced La Trobe. At first the miners welcomed the new governor and were pleased...



HOORAY FOR GOVERNOR HOTHAM!

I SHALL SET UP AN INQUIRY TO REVIEW THE LICENCE LAWS.

HOORAY!

October 1854

Governor Hotham's office, Melbourne



THE COLONY IS £2 MILLION IN DEBT. WE NEED TO RAISE MORE MONEY.

THE LAW MUST BE OBEYED! CHECK FOR LICENCES TWICE A WEEK!

HOW MANY MINERS' LICENCES HAVE BEEN SOLD THIS MONTH?

44 000, SIR.

BUT THERE ARE 77 000 MINERS ON THE DIGGINGS!

YES, SIR, BUT HALF THE DIGGERS HAVEN'T BOUGHT A LICENCE.

THAT'S A DISGRACE!

THE DIGGERS WON'T BE HAPPY...

YES, SIR.

Under Governor Hotham's strict rules, the diggers became angrier and angrier. They were like gunpowder waiting to explode...