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

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.

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

…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.

I waited all day to buy a licence. When I got back, my tent had been robbed.

It’s not fair.

They locked me up for a week and fined me £5. Now I’m broke.

You haven’t found any gold in weeks and my licence fee is due again.

We’re already 40 metres down. The mine will flood!

It’s unfair.

You haven’t found any gold? Dig deeper!

We didn’t make the laws. So we have no say…

We won’t try to hide.

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

July 1853

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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.

Sir Charles Hotham replaced La Trobe. At first the miners welcomed the new governor and were pleased... Under Governor Hotham’s strict rules, the diggers became angrier and angrier. They were like gunpowder waiting to explode...