

THE SCIENCE REPORT

written by

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THE SCIENCE REPORT

PART ONE

FADE IN:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO (HOMEBASE)

This is the set for the weekly newsmagazine THE SCIENCE REPORT. In addition to the obligatory built-in desk, the set is awash in scientific "stuff" -- microscopes, oscilloscopes periscopes... basically lots of scopes. The background is currently a huge photo of the ABCs written on a chalkboard.

Sitting behind the desk is our HOST, CHARLEY LAMKIN. He's a little slow on the uptake but earnest and likeable. More Tom Brokaw than Ted Baxter.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

From our studios in Los Angeles,
it's The Science Report. Here is
your host, Charley Lamkin.

HOST

(into camera)

Welcome to the show. We begin
tonight with a story about letters.
The Japanese alphabet has eighteen
hundred and fifty of them. The
Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two and
the English alphabet has--well, I'm
not so sure anymore. Jane Chandara
has our report.

CUT TO:

INT. CONVENTION HALL

The large meeting hall is filled with distinguished,
scholarly types closely following the speech of a researcher
at the podium. Excitement is in the air.

REPORTER (V.O.)

This is the annual Linguistics
Symposium, a convention held each
spring here in Montreal, Canada.
It's usually a tame event with few
surprises. But this year was very
different. Nobody was ready for
what they heard.

ANGLE ON: The speaker.

SUPER: "Frank Garner - Institute for High Alpha et Studies"

FRANK GARNER

..And so, taking all these spelling limitations into account, we officially propose to supplement the current set of alphabet characters with the addition of a new member.

The room applauds in support.

CUT TO:

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE

The office is filled with reference books. Miles and miles of important looking reference books.

REPORTER

So what he's saying is--

SUPER: "Dr. Louis Emanuel - Editor, Webster's Dictionary"

DR. EMANUEL

(confirming)

They want to add a twenty-seventh letter to the alphabet.

REPORTER

Can they do that?

DR. EMANUEL

It's going to be tough. Remember when they tried getting "Y" declared a vowel? We all know how that turned out--ended up with that stupid "Sometimes Y" compromise.

REPORTER

Do we NEED another letter?

DR. EMANUEL

Of course we do. With a new letter we'll be able to spell words we can't now. For example, you know the sound the doors make on Star Trek?

(makes sound)

How do you spell that? You can't. We don't have the letters. Or a police taser.

(makes sound)

See, years ago all they had were muskets. BANG! "B", "A", "N", "G".

(MORE)

DR. EMANUEL (CONT'D)

They invented those letters. But a game show buzzer? They didn't have a clue. I spell words for a living. Trust me, we need this letter.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Establishing shots of a busy reception area. On the wall is a logo and the words: INSTITUTE FOR HIGH ALPHABET STUDIES.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Obviously we wanted to know more. So we decided to come here, The Institute For High Alphabet Studies, and talk to the folks who made the proposal.

CUT TO:

INT. RESEARCHER'S OFFICE

This is the office of FRANK GARNER, the speaker from the symposium. If you have a sharp eye you'll notice that in the background is an album by The Lettermen, a varsity letter, a Late Show w/ David Letterman T-shirt, a box of Alphabets cereal..you get the idea.

FRANK GARNER

We haven't worked out all the details yet. All we can say for sure is that the new letter will probably be placed between "F" and "G" and will look like this.

Shows a card with the symbol for the new letter.

REPORTER

How do you pronounce it?

FRANK GARNER

Nnniizzz.

REPORTER

Nnnuuuzzz.

FRANK GARNER

Close. Push your tongue more to the roof of your mouth. It should have an electricity sound. Nnniizzz.

REPORTER
 (getting it right)
 Nnniizzz.

FRANK GARNER
 Exactly.

REPORTER
 When do we start using it?

FRANK GARNER
 That could be a ways off. Once the
 details are ironed out we still
 have to send the proposal to
 Congress for their approval.

REPORTER
 What sort of details?

FRANK GARNER
 A name, for one. The front-runners
 so far are Enzie, Nince, and
 Debbie.
 (admitting)
 My daughter's name is Debbie.

REPORTER
 A letter named after a girl?

FRANK GARNER
 Why not? we already have "K".

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITION STUDIOS HALLWAY

A cattle call audition. The corridor is filled with a bizarre
 collection of singers, musicians and general misfits dressed
 in their performing attire. It looks like a Broadway musical
 exploded.

REPORTER
 (into camera)
 Approval of the letter could take
 months but preparations are already
 being made for its arrival. This is
 the audition studios at Capital
 Records in Hollywood. If the letter
 becomes official that familiar ABC
 song we all learned in school will
 become obsolete which means huge
 royalties for whoever writes the
 new one.

(MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)
 All these people have their own
 idea of what that new song should
 sound like.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE

Quick MONTAGE of new ABC song submissions. Between each one
 we hear "Thank you" from the judges.

AN ACCORDIONIST (to the tune of "Beer Barrel Polka")

ACCORDIONIST
 (singing)
 A B C D, E F G--

AN OPERA SINGER making the most of each note.

OPERA SINGER
 (singing)
 A B c D, E F G--

A BARBERSHOP QUARTET (in four part harmony)

QUARTET
 (singing)
 A B C, How I love D, How I love D,
 E F G H,--

A FOLK SINGER (to the tune "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?")

FOLK SINGER
 (singing)
 Where have all the letters gone? A
 B CCCC, D E F --

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE

A standard law office with the standard collection of books
 on the shelves all with the same exact cover.

SUPER: "Sam Annosant. Attorney at Law"

LAWYER
 I'm thrilled by the thought of it.
 A new letter would mean more legal
 loopholes for my drunk driving
 clients.

(MORE)

LAWYER (CONT'D)

I can argue that the arresting officer didn't specify which alphabet to recite. Or that my client wasn't drunk but rather was weaving because he suffers from Change In The Alphabet Syndrome.

REPORTER

Change In The Alphabet Syndrome?

LAWYER

I'm pretty sure it's going to be a very common disorder.

CUT TO:

INT. KEYBOARD FACTORY

The "Skunkworks" of a large typewriter manufacturer. This is where they build the prototypes.

SUPER: "Lowell R. Case - Smith Corona"

LOUIE

A new letter comes along, what, once in a lifetime, right? Probably less than that. So people are going to need new typewriters, right? And that means more sales. I mean, it makes sense, right?

The camera pans a table of new keyboard prototypes. (The " ' key is hanging off the side, sticking up above the keyboard, alone on a separate one-key keyboard...)

LOUIE (V.O.)

Of course, we haven't figured out where to put the friggin' thing yet but we will. Don't you worry about that, my friend.

As the camera continues to pan:

REPORTER (V.O.)

But not everyone is so excited about the new letter.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE

BULL CAMPBELL sits behind his impressive desk in his impressive suit.

He has a napkin bib and is enjoying a bowl of hot soup. On a nearby side table sits a cut-glass bowl.

Rather than hard candies it is filled with cellophane packets of saltines.

SUPER: "Bull Campbell - V.P. Sales, Campbell's Soup Company"

CAMPBELL

We estimate one point four million to retool Alphabet Soup. You just can't throw in additional letters. Vowels and consonants have to be in balance and that takes time. Then we have to print new labels, update catalogs...

Customers will have to eat that cost.

REPORTER

So to speak.

CAMPBELL

So to speak.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The parking lot of Warner Brothers. On the lightpoles we see various letters to mark the different sections. Below each letter is a Warner's cartoon character that begins with that letter--"B" for Bugs Bunny, "D" for Daffy Duck...

REPORTER

(into camera)

And what about the tangential costs? This is the parking lot at Warner Brothers. Each section is named after one of their cartoon character--Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Foghorn Leghorn-- A new letter would mean adding a new section which means developing a new character. And that's something the animators have strong feelings about.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAWING STUDIO

An animator's office with drawing board and paints.

The walls are covered with hundreds of drawings of cartoon characters in various stages of completion.

SUPER: "Cary Chure - Warner Bros. Animation Dept."

CARTOONIST

We don't want to waste a speech impediment just because they're redoing the parking lot. It's not the money, it's the impediments we can't afford to spend.

REPORTER

I don't understand.

CARTOONIST

Most of the greats have speech impediments--Porky Pig, Roger Rabbit, Daffy Duck--

REPORTER

(helping)
Stimpy.

CARTOONIST

Precisely.
(then)
The common impediments--stuttering, lisping--they're all taken. That makes the remaining ones more valuable. If we don't start acting more conservatively all we'll be able to create in a few years is a raccoon with Touretts. And nobody wants to see that.
(realizing)
Well, okay, we all want to see that.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT

As before.

REPORTER

(into camera)
And if you think only businesses will be affected, think again. Schools will have to buy new textbooks, prisons will have to buy new molds for the license plates...
(MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)

All this will have to come out of tax dollars. And when you start dipping into the pockets of the working Class, well, that's where some people draw the line.

CUT TO:

INT. BUSY OFFICES

A busy, non-profit organization staffed by dozens of volunteers. Desks and people are stuffed everywhere suggesting that the organization is growing much faster than anticipated. The phones ringing off the hook.

WORKER

(into phone)

Hello, Citizens Against New Alphabet Letters. Can I help you?..

REPORTER (V.O.)

These are the offices of C.A.N.A.L., Citizens Against New Alphabet Letters, a non-profit group lobbying to stop this letter from reaching the public.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER OFFICE

In the background we can see through the glass partition into the busy mayhem of the other desks.

SUPER: "Ida Bindare - Founder, C.A.N.A.L."

SUZANNE

We don't need it. Literacy scores are terrible with the twenty-six letters we have now. A twenty-seventh will only make spelling harder.

REPORTER

Experts say it will make words easier to spell?

SUZANNE

Yeah, right! And Pavarotti doesn't sweat when he walks up a flight of stairs.

(beat)

(MORE)

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

Look, if they want to help, why not make "Q" and "U" one letter? They're always next to each other anyway. Don't add letters, get rid of them.

REPORTER

So you're a minimalist.

SUZANNE

I'm a realist. Our nation is deep in debt. Companies can't afford this. I spoke with the Scrabble people this morning. Do you know how much it would cost to ship new letter blocks to their customers? Millions. This letter is a bad idea and we plan to defeat it at any cost.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF PRINT ADS

A montage of print ads including: The Teachers Union, "This letter spells bad news" and Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Sober people don't vote for new letters."

REPORTER (V.O.)

And they're getting a lot of help. Using direct mailings, radio spots, and magazine ads C.A.N.A.L. has managed to convince an impressive list of organizations to add their name to the cause: The Teacher's Union. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. Even The Catholic Church.

CUT TO:

TV COMMERCIAL

SUPER: "Public Service Announcement"

PRIEST

Hello, I'm Cardinal O'Shaw. You probably heard about a new alphabet letter being considered by Congress. The Church is against it. This new letter would erode the precious values we work so hard to protect.

(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)

It was originally created by pornographers so they could spell the sounds associated with fornication and sodomy. This letter is the work of Satan.--

CUT TO:

INT. RESEARCHER'S OFFICE

As before.

FRANK GARNER

I knew they'd pull some dirty tricks but, come on! How do you respond to something like that?

(then)

I bet this whole smear campaign backfires. I like to think the public isn't that stupid.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE STATE CAPITAL - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "TWO WEEKS LATER"

A large rally at the steps of a State Capital Building. There are placards with " " surrounded by the "no" symbol (red circle with slash.) The crowd is chanting "No new holidays. No new letters!" as the GOVERNOR crosses to the podium at the top of the steps to address the crowd.

GOVERNOR

Fellow citizens, I stand before you today to proudly proclaim that the state of Arizona refuses to recognize any new letters.

The crowd cheers.

GOVERNOR (CONT'D)

And for all you anti-family, left wing liberals out there, here's what we have to say to you: Not in our community!

The crowd cheers again.

ANGLE ON: REPORTER with crowd and Governor in background.

REPORTER
(into camera)
And so the battle lines are clearly
drawn. What it may ultimately come
down to is a contest between those
who feel they'll lose money...

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE

As before.

A SPEED METAL GUITARIST screams his ABC song.

REPORTER (V.O.)
...and those who hope they'll make
money.

The song ends.

JUDGE (O.S.)
Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO (HOMEBASE)

The HOST is joined by REPORTER in a seat behind the desk.

HOST
Interesting story, Jane. As it
stands today, what are the chances
of Congress approving the new
letter?

REPORTER
Not good, Charley. The opposition
has taken the debate out of
academia and moved it into the
pocketbook. None of the congressmen
we spoke with would go on camera
but all agreed that when people
vote from their wallet it's tough
to get measures approved.

HOST
I'm surprised The Church is taking
such a strong stand.

REPORTER

The Church has a history of fighting against things that threaten the status quo: Charles Darwin, Galileo--

HOST

I wonder if they had anything to do with derailing the Betamax a few years back. Because that sure cost me a lot of money.

The host laughs.

REPORTER

(straining laughter)

I wouldn't know about that.

HOST

Thanks, Jane.

HOST (CONT'D)

(into camera)

Next up, a new twist in transportation. Tom Germane has that story when we return.

PART TWO

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO (HOMEBASE)

The set is the same as before except that the backdrop is now a huge photo of a freeway during rush hour.

HOST

(into camera)

Welcome back to The Science Report. If you've ever experienced rush-hour in a big city you'll probably be interested in our next story. Traffic experts now claim they've acquired the technology to make grid-lock a thing of the past. And you won't believe how they plan to do it.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE

The busy offices of Traffic Planning for a major city. On the wall is a movie poster for THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1,2,3. LARRY OVERSELL, the man in charge, is being interviewed by REPORTER 2. Under their conversation you can hear a police scanner.

SUPER: "Larry Oversell - Office Of Traffic Planning"

LARRY OVERSELL

Despite our best efforts, traffic keeps getting worse. We've just about reached the limit of how fast we can get vehicles to travel. We've tried carpool lanes, mass transit... all short term solutions. So one day we asked ourselves, what if we reversed the equation? Instead of putting more cars on the highway, what if we tried to get more bodies into each vehicle?

REPORTER #2

Aren't those called buses?

LARRY OVERSELL

I don't mean making the vehicles bigger. I mean what if we physically reduced the size of the passengers?

REPORTER #2
Shrink people?

LARRY OVERSELL
Exactly! Did you ever go to the circus and see all those clowns get into one tiny car? Obviously the technology exists. We figured all we had to do was get the circus to license us their technology and adapt it for personal vehicles.

REPORTER #2
That makes sense.

LARRY OVERSELL
Unfortunately the circus didn't want to divulge their trade secret. We kept offering more and more money but no deal. We were just about to give up when, out of the blue, they changed their mind and agreed to a deal.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORPORATE FRONT LAWN - DAY

REPORTER 2 stands in front of a sign reading "Big Top Laboratories - Research and Development Division" which sits on the lawn of a sprawling corporate campus. Behind the sign are two and three story buildings extending into the distance. This is no Mom & Pop company.

REPORTER #2
(into camera)
The deal was made with Big Top Laboratories, the world's leading circus research facility. Behind these walls highly skilled researchers figure out more efficient ways to shoot people from cannons and teach chimps to ride bicycles. And when it comes to squeezing clowns into cars, they're the best in the world.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOWN RESEARCH LABS

This could be mistaken for a bio-tech lab except that all the clean shaven researchers are working with clowns.

(Measuring nose diameters, dropping floppy shoes into vats of boiling liquid...) WOODROW KERN is the man in charge.

SUPER: "Woodrow Kern - Chief of Research"

KERN

We can get, on average, thirty-five clowns into a car. The record is forty-two, set by Cirque Du Soleil last summer.

REPORTER #2

How do you guys do it?

KERN

The secret is that clowns compress better than regular people.

KERN turns to a whiteboard filled with complicated formulas. He realizes that trying to explain would be useless.

KERN (CONT'D)

It's pretty complicated. It would be like trying to explain physics to a seven year old. No offense.

(then)

Basically it has to do with the interaction between all that makeup and the floppy shoes.

REPORTER #2

You're saying clown make-up shrinks people?

KERN

And the shoes. They have to be worn in combination. That's why you can't get a lot of rodeo clowns in a car-- they're wearing boots.

REPORTER #2

That's your big trade secret? Makeup and shoes?

KERN

Water is just hydrogen and oxygen but try making it yourself. We know the exact formulas to make it work. There's a ton of variables.

REPORTER #2

What sorts of variables?

KERN

Clown types, for example. Happy clowns compress better than sad ones.

REPORTER #2

Why is that?

KERN

They just do. If you mix them in the same car they interact and you end up with a bunch of apathetic clowns. And those don't compress well. You have to know the trick.

REPORTER #2

Which is?

KERN

Before you mix the two you tell the happy clowns they're going to get a raise.

REPORTER #2

(realizing)

I see. That would depress the sad clowns--

KERN

And keep the happy ones happy.
Beat.

REPORTER #2

You guys are going to make a fortune on this licensing deal. Why'd you wait until now?

KERN

To be honest, we didn't want to license this stuff at all. But the past year has been tough. Parents are taking their kids to Vegas instead of the circus, Russian Dancing bears are no longer available... A whole bunch of unconnected things like that made ticket sales head south.

REPORTER #2

So basically it's because--

KERN

(confirming)

We need the money.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORPORATE FRONT LAWN - DAY

As before.

REPORTER #2

(into camera)

And money they're going to get. When other industries heard that clown compression technology--or CCT as it's called--was finally available they too wanted to test it. Within days of the announcement the world was beating a path to Big Top Labs' door.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS: GENERAL MOTORS, AIRLINE TERMINAL, SUBWAY STATION, PRISON

REPORTER #2 (V.O.)

General Motors' Minivan Division. Delta Airlines. The New York City Transit Authority. Even the Federal Corrections System saw the potential.

CUT TO:

INT. - PRISON

REPORTER 2 is escorted past a row of prison cells by SAM DANKER, the Warden.

SUPER: "Sam Danker - Warden, San Quentin"

WARDEN

I was skeptical at first. Putting inmates in clown outfits is something I've steered away from in the past. Role-playing in prison is highly discouraged.

A guard unlocks a cell door.

GUARD

Inspection! Fall out!

One by one clowns come tumbling out of the cell. And they keep coming. One after the other. As:

WARDEN

But it's working. We now fit nine men into cells that used to fit only three. In fact, we have extra cells now. We're thinking of leasing them to the public as storage lockers. And you know the best part? On Saturdays we make extra money renting out the prison for birthday parties. I'm really sold on this compression stuff. In fact, I was sold even before last month's incident.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PRISON - DAY

The huge, foreboding wall of the prison rises ominously in the background like a description in a cheap novel

REPORTER #2

(into camera)

The incident the warden refers to was a prison escape. Although escapes are not new, this one had an interesting twist. The entire group, fourteen men in all, were still wearing their clown suits and therefore able to fit into one getaway car.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Highway Patrolman CHIP SANBORN stands on a stark desert highway, the cool wind in his hair.

SUPER: "Officer Chip Sanborn - California Highway Patrol"

OFFICER

The report of the escape had just come over the radio when I noticed a Ford Escort backfiring down the highway. Granted, these could have been a. different fourteen clowns but I played a hunch. It's a good thing they were still wearing the clown suits otherwise they'd probably be at a muffler shop in Mexico by now.

(beat)

Can I get a copy of this tape?

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE PRISON - DAY

As before.

REPORTER #2

(into camera)

Actually the escaped men had no choice. If they took off the clown suits they'd no longer fit in the car. Remember, CCT only works if everybody is wearing make-up and big shoes. This turns out to be a bonus during a manhunt but a liability in other situations.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE AT THE PENTAGON

GENERAL STANLEY MOCHA is a decorated military officer. In the background we see a box of Captain Crunch cereal, a Sargent Pepper album, a Captain and Tennille CD... you get the idea. The General is eating pistachios which has covered his hands with red dye.

SUPER: "General Stanley Mocha - Marine Transport Operations"

GENERAL MOCHA

Our goal is to get all the troops into the battlefield in one truck. My biggest costs are fuel and parking tickets. Tickets we can't do much about--tanks are hard to parallel park so sometimes they're going to stick out in the red zone. But fuel costs, that's a different story.

REPORTER

you hope to squeeze more soldiers into each truck?

GENERAL MOCHA

Trucks, tanks, submarines... even latrines. Who knows? This could save the taxpayers billions. Unfortunately the tests aren't going well.

(offering)

Pistachio?

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Marine troops are doing calisthenics, marching, drill training... Oh yeah, everyone but the Sergeant is dressed like a clown.

REPORTER #2 (V.O.)

The Pentagon has been testing CCT here. The Marine Corp. Proving Grounds outside of Raleigh, North Carolina.

ANGLE ON: One by one soldiers attack a hanging dummy with their rifle, pull out a seltzer bottle, and spray the dummy.

SERGEANT

Let's go, ladies! Pick up those feet! What are you, a bunch of sissies?

A soldier fumbles.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

What's wrong, soldier? When I say jump, you jump! Understand?

The soldier honks his horn.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

I can't hear you!

The soldier honks louder.

ANGLE ON: Soldiers marching in background shouting "Hup, two, three, four". Each time they reach "four" they honk their horns.

REPORTER #2 (V.O.)

So far the base has shown an impressive forty percent reduction in fuel costs thanks to CCT. So why did the General say the tests weren't going well? Because unfortunately those savings come at a price. Take a look at this videotape shot during night maneuvers.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT (IN BLACK & WHITE)

A hazy grey beach. In the corner of the screen is the word REC with a red light. The camera pans the deserted beach.

We hear various voices whispering that they don't see anyone.

Suddenly dark silhouettes come over the top of the dunes. We can make out that they're marines storming the beach.

Everything is grey and hazy except for their bright red clown noses, balloon animals and confetti. The marines are obviously tripping over their own feet and clothes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OFFICE AT THE PENTAGON

The camera pulls back to reveal GENERAL MOCHA has been viewing the proceeding videotape on a T.V.

GENERAL MOCHA

You can't storm a beach in a clown suit. Look at those plaid jackets. What, are we going back to Grenada and recapture golf courses? Not exactly camouflage, is it?

(offering)

You sure you don't want a pistachio?

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF LOCKHEED BUILDING - DAY

Establishing shots of Lockheed's Corporate Headquarters.

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

When the military realized the suits hindered a soldier's combat ability they did what they always do when there's a problem. They called the defense contractors.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKHEED DEMO ROOM

A product demonstration room with the Lockheed logo hanging on the wall.

A clown suit hangs on a display mannequin. It looks regular clown outfit but instead of loud fabrics and colors it's made from black and green camouflage.

SUPER: "Glenn Milmer - Lockheed, Haberdash Division"

MILMER

This is the Lockheed All Terrain Clown Combat Suit. It does everything a regular clown suit does but weighs only half as much which makes it easier to fight in. It's very high tech. The nose-glasses are made from a non-reflective Mylar composite. There's also an attachment for infrared. Notice the blazer pockets. They look regular from the outside but they're roomy enough to hold two grenades and an extra large round of confetti--

REPORTER #2

(noticing)

This confetti is black.

MILMER

That reduces the chance of being spotted at night.

REPORTER #2

What's something like this cost?

MILMER

Six thousand. About the price of a hammer.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORPORATE CAMPUS LAWN - DAY

As before.

REPORTER #2

(into camera)

The Pentagon likes the new suits but they've recently put their testing on hold. In fact, all the companies testing CCT have stopped. It seems last week the price went up. Way up. But don't blame Big Top Labs. Two days before the first licensing deadline the center got a phonecall from Leon Hattrick. He heads the clown union.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF UNION PRESIDENT

This office Could easily belong to a corporate lawyer, what with all the dark wood and tasteful art. LEON HATTRICK is dressed in a thousand dollar suit.

REPORTER #2

You're saying that every person who puts on a clown outfit has to join the union?

SUPERIMPOSE:

"Leon Hattrick - International Brotherhood of Clowns, Barkers, and Organ Grinders"

HATTRICK

Yes. People who dress like clowns are clowns. It's as simple as that.

REPORTER #2

But they're not professionals.

HATTRICK

If I'm in a movie can I say "I'm not really an actor. I refuse to join the union"? No. I would have to join. They would make me join. That's all we're doing here.

REPORTER #2

How much are we talking about?

HATTRICK

Membership costs twenty-five hundred dollars plus thirty a year in dues.

That includes a ten percent discount to the circus. You just show your membership card at the tent.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE AT THE PENTAGON

As before.

GENERAL MOCHA

He's crazy! We're not going to pay twenty-five hundred dollars for every soldier we plan to put in a truck.

REPORTER 2

He said they offered you guys a discount.

GENERAL MOCHA

Associate Membership. Big deal. It's still fifteen hundred per soldier.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOWN RESEARCH LABS

As before.

KERN

They have the legal right to demand people to join the union. But twenty five hundred bucks?! My guess is they're trying to stifle the technology. Keep it away from the public.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF UNION HEAD

As before.

HATTRICK

He's right. We are trying to bury it.

REPORTER #2

What if everybody refuses to pay?

HATTRICK

We'll take 'em to court. That's union busting and it's against the law.

REPORTER #2

Why are you doing this? CCT could rid the air of smog, lower airfares--

HATTRICK

I don't get paid to clean the air. I get paid to keep the membership working. You flood the streets with second-rate clowns and pretty soon all clowns lose their value. This whole thing is anti-clown.

REPORTER #2

How do you respond to those who say you're being irresponsible--hurting the entire country for a few clowns.

HATTRICK

Let me tell you something, cheap airfares don't bring happiness to children on their birthday. Does a dying kid smile when clean air walks into his hospital room? No sir. I'll be damned if I'm going to sit back and let a few greedy companies pull the rug out from under this noble profession.

CUT TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO (HOMEBASE)

HOST is now joined by REPORTER #2 behind the desk.

HOST

You know, Tom, it's too bad the Blacksmith Union didn't challenge Henry Ford with the same vigor. Maybe we wouldn't have so many blacksmiths on Unemployment nowadays.

REPORTER #2 doesn't know if the HOST is serious or not. After a beat..

REPORTER 2

There is a sliver of hope, Charley. The union said they'll agree to meet at the bargaining table if congress establishes a W.P.A--like program for its members. That way if the bottom does drop out of the clown market the government would put them to work rebuilding America's infrastructure.

HOST

You'll keep us unformed?

REPORTER #2

I will.

HOST

(into camera)

And that's our show. Next week we'll report on an anthropologist who thinks mobile homes are actually houseboats that have evolved onto the land and talk with an engineer who figured out a way to rig Rice Krispies with Dolby Noise Reduction. Until then, from our studios here in Los Angeles, I'm Charley Lamkin. See you next week for another installment of The Science Report.

FADE OUT:

-- END --