

Ouch! Bosses, What Do They Know?

By Reg Green

Coverage by the media of recent air disasters has brought to mind the night when my friend, John Adams, a new reporter at the Daily Telegraph in London, where I worked too, was dutifully waiting to add in the final figure for his lowly task of compiling the column of world weather statistics.

The one still missing was the temperature for London which was released at the same time every night. No adult in

England then could have failed to recognize the phrase: "At 9 o'clock the temperature on the Air Ministry roof was so and so degrees.

" It was a ritual as ingrained as the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace.

On this night, however, the normal buzz in the newsroom was shattered by news of an air crash that had every reporter

AIR MINISTRY ROOF (1959)



reassigned: did this aircraft have previous safety issues, any suggestion of terrorism, any well known victims, anything unusual about the flight path or the crew? Writers ran around clutching pieces of paper, subeditors wrestled to reconcile conflicting reports from different sources, editors dropped other stories from the front page and had to find space for them elsewhere.

While the turmoil swirled around him, Adams, carefully keeping out of everyone's way, was spotted immobile at his desk by the night news editor. "What are you doing, John?" he asked sharply. " I'm just waiting for the nine o'clock temperature for the weather column, Mr. Armstrong," he replied. "Well get on with it. Don't just sit there " "But it's only ten minutes to nine, "John said gently. Armstrong's rebuke was unanswerable, "You can try, can't you?"