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THE AIRLINE STRIKE

The nation's largest airline is grounded because there are no pilots to move the throttles, retract the flaps and orbit the planes around onto the familiar radio beams. The AFL union which called the strike says none of these routine motions will be resumed until American Airlines hires two crews to fly planes from the East Coast to California, a flight that requires eight hours and 35 minutes, with inconvenience to passengers en route while a stop is made and crews changed.

It will be difficult for the union to win public sympathy for its "downtrodden" pilot members. Senior pilots on the runs in question, the transcontinental non-stop routes, fly 10 days a month and get 20 days off! They make \$17,000 a year upward and are given all the mechanical and electronic aviation aids that science can pro-

vide, in addition to copilots, flight engineers, and so on.

The union took umbrage because American inaugurated a new non-stop, East-West transcontinental service between New York and Los Angeles. Because of prevailing winds the flight westward is scheduled at eight hours and 35 minutes. A full hour less is required to fly eastbound, for which the pilots get a day's pay, although they do not put in eight hours.

Some transatlantic flights require 10 and more hours in the air. The government watchdog, the Civil Aeronautics Authority, has looked long and hard at the situation and called this stretch of time in the cockpit not dangerous. It is obvious the union is more interested in getting overtime pay for its members, or some new fringe benefit, than with passenger safety.