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Blocking Aviation Progress.

The Airline Pilots Association has called a strike against American Airlines because the company proposed to start non-stop transcontinental service that would require crews to serve eight hours and 35 minutes on the east-west flight. Previously eight hours has been the maximum flight time on domestic routes.

The Civil Aeronautics Board has ruled that "the continued application of the eight hour rule with respect to the transcontinental non-stop is not necessary in the interests of safety." The only issue, therefore, is whether the eight and one-half hour flight constitutes a violation of reasonable working conditions for flight crews.

In this connection, it is worth noting that the crews would be on duty 10 days of the month and off duty 20 days of the month. Because of tailwinds, the west-east flight would be only seven hours and 35 minutes.

Length of continuous service is a defensible matter for bargaining between the company and the union; but in this instance the union is merely preventing aviation progress and better service to air travelers. The union might reasonably object to an increase in total working hours; but this arbitrary insistence on an eight-hour rule seems picayunish.