



Give Light and the  
People Will Find  
Their Own Way



# The Pittsburgh Press

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W. W. Forster, Editor

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Mail Address P. O. Box 566 Pittsburgh 30, Pa.

TELEPHONES—Court 1-4900 (Want Ads only) Court 1-7200 (other departments)

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TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 1954

## Birds in Featherbeds

ACCORDING to all the published reports that we've read, the American Airlines strike was pulled by the pilots' union because the airline put on some non-stop transcontinental flights which keep the crews on duty more than eight hours.

Other non-stop transcontinental airlines have been able to handle the passengers which normally would be carried by the struck line. The union now has voted to strike them, too, which would pretty effectively tie up their business.

★ ★ ★

We don't want to decide who's "right" in this strike or who'll win, and we're not going to get in a complicated hassle over who's doing what and to whom, but we did notice that the union was quoted as saying that flying more than eight hours creates a safety hazard.

That, to give it a gentle word, is apple sauce.

Eight hours on duty may constitute a hard day's work at some things, but not at modern airplane driving.

Way back there, when Fearless Fred kept one hand on the yoke and the other on the throttle, one eye on the airspeed, and the other on the compass and both feet on the pedals, eight hours in the air would have been rigorous indeed.

But nowadays, as soon as the plane is on course and at altitude, the pilot man simply turns on labor saving gadgets like the omni, which points a needle to where he should go, and then lets "George," the automatic pilot do it.

The pilot just sits, in air-conditioned comfort. He also has a co-pilot to help him sit, and a flight engineer to help listen to the engines and measure the gas.

★ ★ ★

This allows one birdman or the other time to catch a snooze, explain how airplanes fly to the pretty girl in the third seat down on the left, read a novel, have a coffee, smoke, write letters, fill out the necessary papers, or just plain loaf.

Matter of fact, on overseas flights, many crews fly more than eight hours, for the very simple reason that there is no place for them to get off, without drowning.

**Pilots, in case you don't know it, don't work eight hours every day anyway. Present rules call for a maximum of 85 total hours a month. That's right, 85 per month!**

So they work an average of three hours a day, which may be spread over 12 hours in one day. The rest of the time they are just resting. The chief pilots affected by this strike make around \$14,000 or \$15,000 a year, we're told. At least.

Have you noticed how wide in the pants seat our lean eagles of yesteryear are getting?

We were talking to a pilot one day who had been on a certain three-hour run for years.

"How do you like this life?" we asked. "Don't you get bored?"

"Nope," he said. "This is a fine life for a lazy man. And I'm lazy."