

Pilots Strike for 35 Minutes

Pilots of American Airlines are on a queer strike. They have grounded all planes of that carrier in a demand for relief crews on nonstop coast-to-coast flights after eight hours in the air.

With prevailing winds, the DC-7s make the eastbound trip in less than eight hours, but going west against those winds takes 35 or 40 minutes longer. So it amounts to a strike for a relief crew for 35 minutes of flying.

The controversy is the more weird for the fact that the DC-7 pilots fly only 10 days each month and are off 20 days, at salaries of \$1,600 a month and upward, according to American Airlines. Yet they say that the extra minutes of flying, five trips a month, create a safety hazard.

Last June the Civil Aeronautics board granted a waiver of the old eight-hour rule and permitted up to 10 hours of continuous duty aloft on pressurized aircraft with a flight crew of at least two pilots and a flight engineer. This was done to allow the extra minutes of flying in those westbound nonstop transcontinental operations. CAB sustained American Airlines' contention that those minutes of extra flight time are absolutely safe, and pointed out that crews on transocean flights are on duty as much as 12 hours. But the pilots union struck, and sought an injunction against the CAB ruling. The court refused to interfere with CAB's "expert judgment."

Smooth, pressurized, high-altitude, non-stop flying in the super-airliners of today is not half as trying as piloting the bucking crates of 1931, when the eight-hour maximum flying-time rule was adopted.

An addition of less than an hour of duty in order to avoid the necessity of landing and using an additional crew for that brief time seems quite reasonable, and it is hard to believe that the brief extra duty raises a safety hazard, considering the fact that there is a pilot and a co-pilot to handle the ship. But the strike goes on, inconveniencing thousands of travelers, not to mention the airline's losses.