

Tapline, Welfare Capitalism, and Mass Mobilization in Lebanon, 1950–1964

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the politics of the technical and of anti-colonial nationalism in the labor history of the Trans-Arabian pipeline, or Tapline, in Lebanon. It covers the period between 1950, when Tapline was completed, and 1963–1964, when the company's Lebanese workforce unionized and participated in a successful nationwide strike. After reviewing the purposes Tapline was built to serve, this chapter examines the technical systems that enabled and regulated the flow of oil through the pipeline and the managerial strategy Tapline pursued to prevent worker mobilization that could disrupt those systems. It then shows how Tapline's Lebanese employees unionized, secured coordinated control over the flow of oil through the pipeline and used their resulting power to contest the terms of their labor. In doing so, this chapter aims to illustrate the unpredictable ways in which technology distributes agency, and the complex and

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seemingly contradictory ways in which labor activism engages with the managerial strategies it opposes.

From 1950 through the 1960s, Tapline was a critical conduit for flows of energy and capital from Saudi Arabia through Lebanon to Western Europe and the United States. As the pipeline itself was built, the Tapline company also assembled a paternalistic management system that provided for workers' welfare, accommodated certain workers' demands, and treated Lebanese as the social equals of their American employers while maintaining disparities of power and compensation. For the first decade of Tapline's operation, this strategy successfully deferred unionization. Though Lebanese workers occupied positions critical to the flow of energy, their lack of organization left American management in control of Tapline's facilities and the terms under which Lebanese workers operated them.

Yet Tapline's Lebanese employees unionized in 1963, thereby gaining the ability to act in concert to halt the flow of petroleum through the pipeline. This control over energy flows gave Tapline's Lebanese unions the ability to force concessions from management, but also required that union leaders unite a workforce of diverse socioeconomic and sectarian backgrounds against the company's American managers. To this end, Tapline's unions employed anti-colonial nationalist discourse that challenged Americans' unequal access to decision-making power, benefits, and pay. But despite the oppositional terms in which they were framed, these demands also represented an insistence that the U.S.-owned company grant Lebanese workers the equal treatment and paternalistic care it had encouraged them to expect.

This chapter aims to make interconnected interventions in the historiographies of Lebanon and the global petroleum industry. Historians of oil have tended to focus on petroleum's upstream and downstream—relations between exporters and importers, exploration of and geopolitical competition over oil fields, producers' political economies, and occasionally ecology and labor in fields and refineries—while paying little attention to the transportation of oil by pipeline, tanker, or other means.¹ This focus on petroleum's upstream and downstream mirrors a tendency to rigidly categorize states as oil-producers or consumers, corresponding in the literature influenced by world-system theory to the core and periphery of the capitalist world.² A similar tendency also emerges in public discourse in the United States on what some call oil dependency, and others regard as oil imperialism. This chapter aims to complicate that picture by examining the history of Tapline, a major piece of midstream oil infrastructure, in

Lebanon, a commercial intermediary that transshipped petroleum and used it to sustain flows of people, capital, and goods.

One exception to the tendency noted above is Timothy Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy*, which devotes significant attention to the politics of transporting energy. Mitchell argues that petroleum transportation technologies like pipelines and tankers tend to neutralize the labor politics of energy by employing small, isolated, and easily controlled workforces.³ Mitchell correctly identifies the ways in which the technical features of such technologies, largely determined by the physical task of moving oil, help managers, engineers, and policymakers insulate transportation systems from disruptive labor activism. Yet as this essay will show, at the scale of the Lebanese nation-state, as opposed to Mitchell's scale of the global oil industry, Lebanese Tapline workers had sufficient control over energy flows to assert autonomy in the workplace and force greater equality within Tapline's hierarchy of labor. This mobilization required social links across collar and communal lines as well as shared workplace experience, a shared repertoire of demands, and a shared language of grievance. Another exception is Rania Ghosn's excellent 2010 doctoral thesis on Tapline, *Geographies of Energy*, which mainly focuses on Tapline's construction and operations in Saudi Arabia and gives only cursory attention to the company's critical Lebanese operations.⁴ This chapter uses Tapline's history in Lebanon to examine the work required to transport oil, to show how and why Lebanese Tapline workers mobilized to gain coordinated control over an oil pipeline's technical processes, and how they exercised that control to change the terms of their labor.

In doing so, it also seeks to demonstrate that Tapline's American managers unintentionally fostered a particular and oppositional form of worker mobilization while conditioning the types of demands that Lebanese Tapline employees would make from management. As will be shown, Tapline's unions were specifically anti-sectarian and cross-collar, and employed anti-colonial nationalist discourse to insist upon equality between Lebanese and non-Lebanese employees. Pointing out the links between Lebanese labor activism and struggles against foreign domination is not new to Lebanese historiography, but previous historians of labor in Lebanon have not examined how particular conditions fostered specific kinds of worker mobilization. Moreover, historians like Elizabeth Thompson, Malek Abisaab, and Ilyās al-Buwārī have drawn a clear line of opposition between Lebanese labor and foreign capital, which is unsurprising given the extent of trade union participation in Mandate-era anti-colonial mobilization and links of solidarity and coordination between organized labor and anti-imperialist

political parties after independence.⁵ Yet as Frederick Cooper has argued in *Colonialism in Question*, this line is not always clear. This chapter aims to show that it certainly was not in the case of Tapline's operations in Lebanon: Tapline's management practices unintentionally encouraged Lebanese workers to unionize, strike, and demand equality between Lebanese and non-Lebanese employees, but that demand was itself informed by elements of Tapline management's own discourse and practices.⁶

Finally, this chapter aims to make an intervention in the historiography of Lebanon. An especially influential strand of pre-civil war Lebanese historiography rendered labor and labor activism invisible by depicting Lebanon as a nation of merchants not suited to manual labor. Much of the historiography written during and after the war either construed Lebanon as a collection of warring sects for which communal loyalty and inter-communal conflict drive all political mobilization, or sought to explain the origins of sectarianism as the primary means of political mobilization. Yet Lebanon has a rich history of labor activism and other forms of nonsectarian mobilization, as historians such as Fawwaz Traboulsi, Elizabeth Thompson, and others have demonstrated, and as 2015's "You Stink" protests have shown. This chapter's final goal is to contribute to the marginalized history of Lebanese labor activism, to show how Lebanese Tapline employees mobilized along anti-sectarian and cross-collar lines, and to link their activities to the broader spectrum of working class and progressive mobilization in post-Mandate Lebanon.

ARAMCO, THE COLD WAR, POST-MANDATE LEBANON, AND TAPLINE

Tapline was born of a confluence of the strategies of Aramco, the U.S. government, and the elites of the states through which the pipeline was to pass. Following an abandoned wartime U.S. government plan for a similar pipeline, Aramco planned in the mid-1940s to construct a pipeline that would transport Saudi oil to the Mediterranean as a means of efficiently supplying European markets.⁷ After the Second World War, the size of the world's postwar oil tanker fleet was insufficient to meet rising petroleum demand, and an overland pipeline promised to be less expensive than the tanker route around the Arabian Peninsula and through the Suez Canal.⁸ Though Tapline was originally planned to terminate in Haifa, the looming partition of Palestine forced Aramco to devise a new route from eastern Saudi Arabia to the Lebanese coast.

Work began on Tapline in 1947 with the diplomatic support of the U.S. government, which sought to develop Saudi Arabia's oil resources to conserve U.S. supplies for use in a war with the Soviet Union, maintain the United States' ability to manage the global oil market through its position as swing producer, and build prosperous non-communist economies in Western Europe and Japan.⁹ Some within the Truman administration also saw Tapline as useful in the United States' prosecution of the Cold War in the Middle East. Aramco quickly seized on that idea. Though Aramco was primarily interested in increasing its profits by cutting transportation costs, the company marketed the pipeline to the Truman administration as a private Marshall Plan for the Middle East that would inoculate the region against communism.¹⁰

In Lebanon, Tapline fit within an elite strategy to make the new nation-state into a regional trade and financial hub.¹¹ Fawwaz Traboulsi notes that local elites conceived of the coast of Ottoman Syria as a commercial intermediary between "East" and "West" at least since the nineteenth century, and continued to develop this region's intermediary role through the Mandate period.¹² As Carolyn Gates has argued, after independence Lebanon's elite aimed to "attract foreign capital; maintain a strong currency, surplus budgets and balanced external accounts; promote international trade and service exports; and mobilize private financial resources to develop the economy" along those lines.¹³ To that end, the Lebanese government invested heavily in its "communications and transport infrastructure," strengthening the position Lebanon had developed as a regional entrepôt since the mid-nineteenth century and taking advantage of the rapid postwar growth of the Persian Gulf's oil industry.¹⁴ Indeed, the vast majority of Lebanon's transportation infrastructure was petroleum-based by the mid-twentieth century, and the country required imported petroleum products like gasoline to sustain the movement of people and goods.¹⁵

When Aramco officials approached the Lebanese government to propose that Tapline's terminal be constructed on the Lebanese coast in the late 1940s, Lebanon's economy was in dire need of the capital and fuel the pipeline promised to provide, and its government was eager to secure revenue—a promised £150,000 in annual transit fees—without increasing taxation.¹⁶ The young state's political elite, including Prime Minister Riyāḍ al-Ṣulḥ and sympathetic editors of major newspapers, therefore, made strong diplomatic and public relations efforts to ensure that Tapline would pass through and terminate in Lebanese territory.¹⁷ Lebanon's parliament unanimously approved a transit agreement with the company in 1946.

Five months later, lawyer and Şulḥ-allied parliamentarian Ḥabīb Abī-Shahla left for Saudi Arabia to help Tapline representatives negotiate a transit agreement with the desert kingdom. When Syria, another prospective transit state, objected to Aramco's plan to terminate the pipeline in Lebanese rather than Syrian territory and attempted to extract additional concessions from the company, Şulḥ expended strenuous diplomatic efforts between 1947 and 1949 to mediate between the two parties, and Shahla interpreted for Tapline representatives in meetings with Syrian officials. Though the Syrian government remained intransigent until a CIA-backed coup overthrew President Shukrī al-Quwatlī in 1949, the high-level involvement of Lebanese politicians like Şulḥ and Shahla—and their willingness to remove the left-populist politician Kamāl Junblāṭ of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) from the government following pressure by U.S. diplomats who were concerned that he was a resource nationalist—indicated deep interest in the project by Lebanon's commercial and political elites.¹⁸

Completed in 1950, Tapline transported Aramco oil from Abqā'iq in eastern Saudi Arabia through Jordan and Syria to Zahrani, south of Sidon, Lebanon.¹⁹ It supplied nearly 110 million barrels of oil per year to tankers in the Mediterranean, equivalent to roughly 25% of Western Europe's oil imports, by 1951.²⁰ Together, Aramco and Tapline's parent companies invested a total of \$168 million in the pipeline by the time of its completion.²¹ This investment made quick returns: in 1952 Tapline seems to have provided roughly \$23 million in profit for Aramco, and its throughput equaled between 30 and 45% of Saudi production until 1960.²² Tapline thus served as a critical piece of infrastructure supporting Aramco's bottom line, U.S. efforts to build and sustain Western Europe's economy, and the U.S. strategy for managing global oil supplies.²³ Tapline was also critical to the Lebanese economy. According to Irene Gendzier, petroleum pumped through Tapline and the larger Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) pipeline accounted for "97% of the tonnage and...45% of the value of goods in transit through Lebanon" by 1952.²⁴ Together, the two pipelines provided Lebanon with the vast majority of its fuel, as well as transit fees for crude exported via Zahrani and Tripoli.

Tapline's construction was the result of a perceived commonality of interest between the U.S. government, Aramco, and transit states including Lebanon. While Tapline did not amount to the Middle East Marshall Plan promised by Aramco, it literally fuelled Western Europe's economic recovery, and it served Aramco's bottom line by permitting the company to sell its petroleum to European markets more economically. Tapline was

also part of a long-standing economic strategy to secure Lebanon's role as a commercial and financial intermediary between the *mashriq* and Western Europe. The pipeline was a vital component of a massive, interconnected network of corporate and state power, centered in the United States, that ensured and regulated the flow of oil to consumers in Western Europe, throughout the capitalist world, and within Lebanon itself. Tapline's Lebanese facilities, which constituted a critical node in this network and in the Lebanese economy, required a trained and disciplined workforce to maintain and regulate the flow of energy.

TAPLINE'S LEBANESE OPERATIONS AND WORKFORCE

Tapline employed a small but diverse workforce to run its Lebanese operations, which were essential to maintaining and regulating the flow of Saudi oil. This workforce was situated within a labor hierarchy predicated on national distinctions in which American managers and European employees generally occupied higher positions than Arab employees. Though Tapline's Lebanese facilities had latent vulnerabilities to disruptive strike action, the company's American managers maintained control over their Lebanese workforce—and thus over the flow of oil through that portion of the pipeline—for more than a decade.

Lebanon hosted two of Tapline's critical facilities: the administrative headquarters in Beirut and the terminal at Zahrani. The pipeline's pumping stations, located mainly in the Saudi desert, were linked to Zahrani and to one another via a Zahrani-based radio system. A Radio and Dispatch office at Tapline's headquarters in Beirut's Ḥamra neighborhood regulated the flow of oil, relaying orders to the pipeline's pumping stations through Zahrani's radio room.²⁵ When crude reached the Zahrani terminal, it was stored and then either pumped into waiting tankers or sent to the adjacent Medreco refinery (after 1955) to be processed into fuel for domestic consumption.²⁶ The British-, French-, and U.S.-owned IPC operated a larger parallel pipeline system, importing Iraqi crude oil for its own refinery and terminal in Tripoli.

The majority of the workers operating this critical piece of infrastructure were located in Lebanon, but Tapline's workforce in Lebanon was small—around 1000 workers between 1953 and 1960—and primarily Lebanese, though it also included Europeans and Palestinians.²⁷ Local employees performed a range of jobs, including medium- and high-skill administrative and technical positions, but most worked at the bottom or middle of

Tapline's hierarchy of labor. These local employees were also subject to internal distinctions of class and sect.

The diverse array of low- to high-skilled positions occupied by Lebanese employees of Tapline gave the company's Lebanese workforce a mixed collar composition. A profile of the Zahrani terminal from the early 1950s provides as sample some of the low- to medium-skilled jobs Lebanese men performed: "M. Makhoul" is listed as a machinist, "Joe Safi" as supervisor of the Zahrani terminal's machine shop, "F. Abboud" as a forklift operator, "Joe Geha" as the terminal's storekeeper, and Moses Bezirgianian as an assistant chemist.²⁸ A large number of Lebanese citizens also worked under American management at Beirut headquarters, including drivers, secretaries, nurses, doctors, receptionists, aircraft dispatchers, architectural draftsmen, and chemical engineers. The workforce also included a number of Armenians, who tended to hold Lebanese citizenship; Palestinians, who tended to have refugee status in Lebanon; and Saudis, who tended to be temporarily transferred from Tapline's facilities in the kingdom.

Though most Lebanese Tapline employees filled such low- and medium-skilled positions, some were highly educated and performed high-skilled work. Raja' Ilīya, trained as a civil engineer at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the University of Texas, joined Tapline in 1949 to survey the pipeline route before becoming a structural engineer in 1952.²⁹ Dzocack Manoukian, who had been displaced from Anatolia to Lebanon in the 1920s, graduated from AUB's nursing school and became head nurse at Tapline's hospital in Beirut. Fu'ād Qa'wār and Albert Laḥḥam served as local attorneys for the pipeline's Lebanese operations.³⁰ A very small number of Lebanese even held positions near the top of Tapline's labor hierarchy, including Ḥabīb Abī-Shahla, the lawyer and former Speaker of Parliament who had helped negotiate Tapline's agreement with the Saudi government and subsequently served as the company's head legal representative in the Middle East.

Tapline's Lebanese workforce also had a mixed sectarian makeup and was imbricated in sectarian patronage politics. When Tapline was first built, Aḥmad al-As'ad, a member of parliament who served as the head of Lebanon's Chamber of Deputies and was an important figure in Sidon's local politics, secured employment for his constituents at Zahrani. Ḥabīb Abī-Shahla did the same at Beirut headquarters. Employees at Beirut, therefore, tended to be Greek Orthodox like Abī-Shahla, and employees at Zahrani tended to be Shī'a like As'ad. Zahrani's workforce also included many supporters of the Arab nationalist, Sunnī Muslim politician Ma'rūf Sa'd. Still,

hiring did not take place on intentionally sectarian lines, and neither site was completely dominated by employees of any particular sect.³¹

Though most of Tapline's diverse Lebanese workforce held relatively low positions in Tapline's labor hierarchy, they also performed critical semi-skilled and skilled tasks. As tankers approached the Zahrani terminal, tugboats manned by Lebanese workers transported European "mooring masters" aboard to help tanker captains position their ships. The Lebanese tugboat crews then secured the tankers in place and led hoses onto them to offload petroleum from Zahrani's high-capacity tank farm.³² By the late 1950s, amidst a wider push to employ more local labor, the company had also trained a group of English-speaking Lebanese radio operators who were responsible for maintaining communications between Beirut headquarters and the rest of the pipeline.³³

Tapline's communications and offloading systems had multiple vulnerabilities ripe for exploitation by Lebanese workers in strategic positions. Though the Radio and Dispatch Office at Beirut headquarters regulated the flow of oil, the central node of the entire communication system was at Zahrani.³⁴ An official Tapline publication described this system as follows:

The dispatchers and management maintain communication with the pump stations entirely by means of radio. The pump stations are connected by HF voice and teletype circuits to one another and to the Sidon [Zahrani] Terminal. Oil dispatching circuits are connected from Sidon to Beirut headquarters via a VHF multichannel link. Administrative and general communication between the Beirut office and the Sidon Terminal is accomplished by dialing telephone circuits over the VHF radio link. Calls between pump stations and the Beirut office are connected by a radio operator at Sidon.³⁵

This arrangement left Beirut headquarters completely dependent upon communication with Zahrani's radio room to maintain and regulate the flow of oil.³⁶ Zahrani's communications staff was also responsible for maintaining contact with oil tankers, making that site's radio operators integral to the pipeline's functioning.³⁷ Lebanese workers increasingly occupied positions essential to the flow of oil through the pipeline and its distribution to markets, but could not exploit that positional power without organizing.

Beyond its vulnerability to disruption at key chokepoints, Tapline's connections to other portions of Lebanon's energy infrastructure made

Lebanon's whole energy distribution system vulnerable to mass mobilization.³⁸ Tapline employees maintained constant contact with other Lebanese petroleum workers, forming a network of laborers covering the country's entire petroleum distribution infrastructure. Oil shipped through Tapline to Zahrani was processed at the adjacent Medreco refinery, which provided fuel for gasoline truck drivers who delivered their cargo to gas station owners and to workers who refueled planes at Beirut's international airport.³⁹ Parallel links connected the IPC terminal and refinery in Tripoli to this workers' network.⁴⁰ These links between workers throughout Lebanon created the informal connections needed for nationwide coordination.

Lebanese workers occupied a relatively low place in Tapline's division of labor but constituted a majority of the company's workforce in Lebanon, and the vast majority of the workforce at the pipeline's Zahrani terminal. They also gained increasing amounts of control over processes critical to the pipeline's operation, creating latent vulnerabilities to strike action. Though they were divided along lines of collar and sect, common experience at the lower end of the company's labor hierarchy as objects of the U.S. company's management practices would generate a set of shared grievances among Lebanese employees, and spur their unionization. Shared control over the pipeline's operation would then allow diverse but organized Lebanese Tapline workers to threaten the flow of oil and demand changes to the terms of their labor.

TAPLINE'S EVOLVING WELFARE CAPITALISM

To control its small, diverse, and potentially powerful workforce, Tapline introduced a U.S. variety of welfare capitalism—designed largely to deter worker mobilization—into the tumultuous labor environment of 1950s Lebanon. Though they initially lacked a union, the company's Lebanese employees also pushed for the further extension of benefits and rights from their employer, and between 1950 and 1963, Tapline's brand of welfare capitalism evolved from a confluence of top-down and bottom-up pressures.

Lebanon had a long history of labor activism against foreign-controlled companies before Tapline's construction. As Elizabeth Thompson notes about the French Mandate era,

Labor strikes proliferated in the late 1920s... In the vanguard were public-sector workers at ports and in the railroad, tramway, and electric companies, along with workers in the tobacco and transport industries. They were joined by many artisans, particularly in textile and shoemaking trades. The number and size of strikes increased in the early 1930s, as wages fell and unemployment rose...⁴¹

Much Mandate-era labor activism was directed against French companies, and Thompson contends that this activism aimed to strengthen state provision of welfare to reduce workers' dependence upon "mediating paternalistic elites—in their case, bourgeois employers and French concessionary companies."⁴² In Lebanon as in the United States and Europe, labor activism intensified after the Second World War. In 1946—the year of the French withdrawal from Lebanon—this pressure led to the passage of a labor law that supported unionization.⁴³

Yet the foreign-dominated petroleum industry initially shielded itself from these developments. As Gendzier notes, foreign petroleum companies were granted informal exemptions from the 1946 labor law.⁴⁴ In 1947, employees of IPC, Socony-Vacuum, and Shell struck for a raise framed as a "13th month" of pay—common in multiple sectors of the Lebanese economy. The Lebanese government then permitted petroleum companies to dismiss employees at will if they paid one month's wages in compensation, in violation of Lebanon's recently passed labor code. The companies—including Tapline, which was in its construction phase—fired most Lebanese petroleum workers and began relying on easily terminated contractors,⁴⁵ establishing a government-backed, industry-wide informal exemption from the new labor law and eliminating the sector's "13th month" precedent. The petroleum industry thereby insulated itself from labor activism, although some oil companies remained unionized.⁴⁶

Tapline pursued a management strategy intended to contain these pressures and prevent its workforce in Lebanon and elsewhere from unionizing. This strategy of providing paternalistic care to maintain hierarchy was reminiscent of that employed by Lebanon's "mediating paternalistic elites," to use Thompson's phrasing. But its roots lay in what Lizabeth Cohen identifies as U.S. "welfare capitalism," which emerged in the United States in the 1920s and evolved in response to the growing power of U.S. unions into the 1950s.⁴⁷ In welfare capitalist firms, management provided for employees' welfare, and occasionally allowed worker

input in production processes, to improve productivity, harmonize industrial relations, and preempt unionization.⁴⁸

Such firms' strategies for dealing with ethnic, national, and religious difference varied by location. In certain parts of the United States, these firms employed mixed workforces of European immigrants, African-Americans, and Latinos, and often exploited that diversity to intentionally undermine labor solidarity.⁴⁹ In the U.S. South and Southwest, and in U.S.-operated oil fields around the world including those owned by Aramco in Saudi Arabia, welfare capitalist firms racially segregated their workforces while providing workers with paternalistic care.⁵⁰ Tapline's Saudi operations followed a similar pattern, providing housing and industrial training for Saudi employees in order to defer worker mobilization and demands for equal pay between locals and foreigners.⁵¹

Yet Aramco and Tapline imported an unsegregated, relatively egalitarian version of welfare capitalism to Lebanon, quite distinct from Aramco's segregated Saudi oil fields. As noted, the company's headquarters and terminal employed highly skilled, English-speaking white-collar American, European, Lebanese, Armenian-Lebanese, and Palestinian staff alongside Arabic-speaking, blue-collar Lebanese and other Arab workers, all under American management. English-speaking Lebanese draftsmen, engineers, secretaries, and lawyers worked alongside their American and European bosses and European and Palestinian coworkers. Efficiency aside, Americans' perception of Lebanese "whiteness" (as opposed to Saudi "blackness") may also have prevented segregation.⁵²

The company's Lebanese facilities were mostly marked by spatial egalitarianism. Foreign and Lebanese employees of diverse religious backgrounds worked side-by-side at Beirut headquarters. Most employees, foreign and Lebanese, commuted by automobile from Sidon and its suburbs to work at the Zahrani terminal.⁵³ The social lives of Tapline employees and their families also included socially egalitarian spaces organized and supported by the company. The Tapline Sporting Club, overseen by an American Manager of Industrial Relations and a group of elected officers and committee members that included Lebanese workers, held social events open to all employees.⁵⁴ Golf and softball tournaments included employees of all nationalities.⁵⁵ The Sidon Welfare Society, established by the American, European, and Lebanese wives of Tapline employees, met weekly in the early 1950s to sew garments for Palestinian refugees.⁵⁶ Both work and leisure time were marked by a degree of inclusiveness that differed starkly from Aramco's Saudi operations, and

helped foster an expectation of equality among workers who occupied very different positions in the labor hierarchy.

To be clear, a lack of segregation did not entail a lack of hierarchy. As noted, Americans occupied the most senior positions in the company, with a few exceptions. American managers were also paid much more than their Lebanese employees, and the Zahrani terminal's four American managers had large houses on-site. American and European employees also tended to receive more ample benefits than their Lebanese subordinates and coworkers, including free, on-site English-language schooling at Zahrani and a Loan Assistance Program for house purchases and emergencies. Furthermore, Tapline's Lebanese workers were not unionized, leaving American management in control of the terms of their labor.

But Tapline strained to emphasize the social equality of its employees in its official discourse. The *Pipeline Periscope*, the company's in-house newsletter, reported on work and social news, including profiles of individuals and offices, retirements, deaths, births, and sports tournaments, covering both Arab and non-Arab employees. The publication's first issue noted that its "purpose is to bring together the employees of Tapline... of more than a dozen nationalities, into a closer understanding of one another and of the Company for which we work."⁵⁷ Company publications represented employees of all nationalities, sects, and collars as belonging to a single community, and regarded them as socially equal enough to be represented side-by-side. Despite the work and wage hierarchies that characterized Tapline's operations, the company made strenuous efforts to convince its employees that they were social equals, and created spaces in which they could act as such.

Intervention in employees' health and welfare was another key feature of Tapline's strategy to maintain a productive, healthy, and disciplined workforce. The firm established company-owned clinics and hospitals, launched initiatives to reduce workplace injuries, and undertook inoculation campaigns. The *Periscope* regularly published graphs of accident rates to make employees monitor their own workplace behavior, and frequently included cartoons with captions such as "When you're NOT ALERT you may be HURT, "Accidents don't just HAPPEN they are CAUSED," and "Two drips make a drop! *Keep oil off the floor.*"⁵⁸ The company campaigned to inoculate workers against typhus, tetanus, smallpox, diphtheria, and whooping cough in 1953.⁵⁹ Tapline also added a wing to AUB's hospital to treat serious workplace injuries.⁶⁰

The company made even more holistic interventions in employee health, welfare, and social reproduction. Tapline established a sporting club in Beirut in 1953 open to employees and their families for a small annual fee to maintain its workforce's health and provide for their leisure.⁶¹ In 1954, it began offering to pay for half of the cost of an insurance plan for "eligible employees" of all nationalities and their families. According to the *Periscope*, the plan "[provided] generous benefits in cases where members need hospitalization because of serious illness, accident, or surgery," also to minimize the impact of employees' injuries on productivity.⁶² Tapline invested significant resources in ensuring the welfare of its workforce, and repeatedly communicated that commitment through official media like the *Periscope*.

Such practices insulated Tapline from, but did not inoculate it against, the working-class mobilization roiling independent Lebanon. In the early post-Mandate years, Lebanese workers made demands similar to those that the company's variety of welfare capitalism aimed to meet. In 1949, Lebanon's government and unions negotiated the first draft of a Social Insurance law that included disability, workplace injury, unemployment, retirement, maternity leave, and other benefits. Though they lacked a union, IPC workers struck in 1950 to protest a mass termination, prevent such actions in the future, and secure free health care and other benefits. Strikes making similar demands continued into the 1950s.⁶³ By the mid-1950s many of Lebanon's populist parties, from the leftist PSP to the right-populist Kata'ib, were calling for a more equitable distribution of wealth and for state investment in social reproduction.⁶⁴

As Lebanon's working class mobilized into the 1960s, Lebanese Tapline employees demanded and received additional benefits from the company. In 1956, employees at Beirut and Zahrani established workers' committees with the approval of management, which picked their members and even appointed Arabic-English interpreters to facilitate—and manage—employees' airing of grievances.⁶⁵ This fit within a long-standing pattern of industrial democracy in American welfare capitalism, in which management established tightly controlled workers' councils to allow workers' limited input into decision-making while deferring unionization.⁶⁶ In 1963, Lebanese Tapline employees requested and received access to the Loan Assistance Program, originally established for American and Saudi employees, which lent money for housing purchases, remodeling, "unanticipated personal expenses due to emergency illness or death," and "other essential purposes of a non-luxury nature" to maintain and improve employees' welfare, assist in social

reproduction, and encourage the proliferation of single-family households.⁶⁷ Lebanese employees also requested and received the construction of a second sports club, this one in Sidon.⁶⁸ Tapline's brand of welfare capitalism thus evolved in response to Lebanese employees' demands, themselves informed by the demands of other Lebanese workers.

Yet Tapline's stated concern for and investment in employees' welfare also fostered expectations of care that management was unwilling to undertake. In the late 1950s the company paid for one employee, Muḥammad Fu'ād Khabbāz, who had lost a leg in a workplace accident, to be flown to Austria to receive a prosthesis. One year later, it granted Khabbāz an indemnity of 10,000 Lebanese *lira* when it became clear that he could or would no longer perform his duties.⁶⁹ Though the company claimed to have offered Khabbāz another job, he apparently refused. In 1963 he requested further compensation for his injury, which management rejected.⁷⁰ While the precise circumstances of Khabbāz's injury, treatment, and termination are unclear, his experience demonstrates that Tapline's commitment to its employees' welfare was more limited than some employees had come to expect.

Finally, poor and unequal treatment of Lebanese workers belied the company's egalitarian discourse and undermined its more benign forms of paternalism. According to Ayyūb Shāmī, who would ultimately establish Tapline's first union, the racism shown by some managers—including especially a former ship captain from the U.S. South who had previously worked in Aramco's segregated Saudi facilities—translated into profoundly unequal treatment: American managers routinely gave Lebanese workers 16-hour shifts for a week at a time, terminated Lebanese employees without giving reason, and required skilled Lebanese workers to perform menial tasks like sweeping and mopping not expected of equally skilled Americans and Europeans.⁷¹

To prevent disruptive labor mobilization of the kind that rocked Lebanon during and after the French Mandate, Tapline pursued a management strategy that promised employees social equality and paternalistic care in exchange for productivity and docility. Tapline's variety of welfare capitalism also included a racially inflected, nationality-based hierarchy of labor that made most Lebanese subordinate to their American managers, a management-controlled workers' council that allowed the company to respond to employees' grievances without granting them autonomy, and an unequal distribution of pay and benefits to American, European, and Arab employees. Still, between 1950 and 1963 Tapline granted certain

benefits requested by its Lebanese workforce, and its particular brand of welfare capitalism evolved in response to its workforce's demands and workers' mobilization across Lebanon. Yet Tapline's emphasis on equality was not reflected in its managers' reported treatment of its Lebanese employees, and its concern for workers' well-being did not entail the promise of permanent employment or care. By the early 1960s, Tapline's management practices had encouraged expectations of equality and care among its Lebanese employees that the company was unable or unwilling to fulfill. This, together with managers' demeaning and apparently racist informal practices, called into question the company's official commitment to the social equality of its diverse workforce and generated grievances that Tapline's Lebanese workforce mobilized to redress.

UNIONIZATION AND ANTI-COLONIAL NATIONALISM

In 1963, Lebanese Tapline employees unionized and began agitating more actively and effectively to improve the terms of their labor. This mobilization crossed the sectarian and collar lines dividing Tapline's Lebanese workforce—striking workers protested perceived American racism and employed anti-colonial nationalist discourse to insist that Lebanese workers, whatever their socioeconomic and sectarian backgrounds, were the equals of the Americans and Europeans that worked for the company. Though the union was not involved in formal politics and did not ally itself with anti-imperialist political parties within Lebanon, its use of anti-colonial nationalist discourse to protest mistreatment and unify workers of disparate backgrounds who controlled different portions of Tapline's technical systems resonated in the context of Lebanese politics in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Yet as Frederick Cooper argues, anti-colonial labor activism does not necessarily entail a strict rejection of the discourse with which foreign capital justifies the division and terms of labor, “but [can] instead [be] an engagement with it—the molding of... rhetoric into a language of claims,” and the employment of foreign capital's “egalitarian assertions to try to turn them into a reality.”⁷² Labor activism framed in anti-colonial terms, then, can “[bind] workers more tightly” to their foreign employers, and represents a complex interplay between resistance against and reinforcement of the relationship between labor and management.⁷³ As noted, Tapline's qualified egalitarianism and its paternalistic investment in employees' welfare helped foster expectations of care and equal treatment among them. Its failure to meet these expectations generated grievances

that Tapline's Lebanese employees mobilized to redress, using anti-colonial nationalist discourse to organize workers across lines of collar and sect to wield shared power over Tapline's technical systems.

Though Tapline's unions actively avoided involvement in Lebanese party politics, the rhetoric of anti-colonial nationalism was readily available as a means of mobilizing across collar and sectarian lines to demand more equal treatment. Unions had been instrumental in challenging the French Mandate, and anti-colonial Lebanese nationalism continued to evolve alongside organized labor after independence. Soon after Tapline's construction began, for example, representatives of a union federation decried the small number of jobs the pipeline had generated, and asked rhetorically in pamphlets and newspapers if Tapline's control over Lebanese land, waters, and resources did not constitute a form of imperialism. Unionized workers and anti-colonial nationalists also often found a shared foe in the Lebanese government. Presidents Bishāra al-Khūrī and Kamīl Sham'ūn actively suppressed Lebanon's more progressive unions, and their governments launched raids on leftist syndicates between 1948 and 1958.⁷⁴ When President Sham'ūn began abandoning Lebanon's avowed neutralism in international affairs and leaned toward the capitalist United States in the early 1950s, left-leaning unions participated in anti-imperialist demonstrations. Workers and students led a strike against the U.S.-backed Baghdad Pact in 1954, for example, and progressive unions and parties mobilized against a 1955 visit by President Celal Bayar of Turkey, a NATO and Baghdad Pact member, triggering raids against union offices.⁷⁵

Lebanon's 1958 civil war brought a shift in Lebanese labor politics. Following covert U.S. intervention in the country's 1957 elections and Sham'ūn's attempt to secure a second, unconstitutional presidential term, Kamāl Junblāt's PSP led a bloc of leftist, progressive, and other anti-Sham'ūnist forces in a brief revolt, leading to U.S. military and political intervention that removed Sham'ūn. The new president Fu'ād Shihāb, who aimed to construct a more socially inclusive and economically statist Lebanon, was backed by populists from the leftist PSP to the rightist Katā'ib.⁷⁶ Shihāb's integration of non-Christians into the civil service and promises of "comprehensive social reform" resonated with the types of changes that Lebanon's populists and organized labor had long sought. Moreover, while Shihāb's government continued to use the intelligence services to monitor union activity, it also attempted to manage labor activism through dispute resolution rather than direct repression.⁷⁷ In a sign of how labor politics had shifted, in 1963 workers won the creation of

a state-run social security program that had been subject to 14 years of debate between Lebanon's government and unions.⁷⁸

Foreign oil companies occupied a complex position in this shifting political environment, but were increasingly treated as antagonists in an anti-imperial struggle for equality and independence in which many progressives and workers saw themselves participating. Under Khūrī and Sham'ūn, the Lebanese government had often intervened on the side of foreign oil companies in labor disputes—for example, by permitting IPC to fire 1200 employees in 1950.⁷⁹ Yet in 1956, IPC workers mobilized in support of the Sham'ūn government's attempt to increase its share of transit fees from the company.⁸⁰ Indeed, foreign oil companies became increasingly identified with colonialism over time. At AUB, Arab nationalist journals such as *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* called for the nationalization of foreign companies like Tapline, which one contributor claimed “[sucked] up the resources from the workers and the peasants and the producers and the employees.”⁸¹ For its part, Tapline's management was careful to remain neutral in the 1958 civil war, and even requested that Marines not guard its facilities during the fighting.⁸² Nonetheless, U.S. intervention in that conflict was motivated in part by a desire to maintain Lebanon's position as a friendly oil transit state, and unsurprisingly led left-leaning politicians like the PSP's Kamāl Junblāṭ to accuse companies like Tapline of resource imperialism.⁸³ The prevalence of such political discourse by the early 1960s prepared the ground for an association between U.S. economic domination and local working conditions at Tapline's Lebanese facilities.

When Lebanese Tapline workers organized in 1963, they quickly made a rhetorical connection between local and national subordination in their protests. Ayyūb Shāmī, a radio technician working at Zahrani terminal's communications room, began the push for unionization in response to a set of grievances engendered in part by the expectations of equality and care fostered by Tapline's welfare capitalism. Though Shāmī recalls being treated well himself, he chafed at the treatment of his fellow employees, which he remembers as disrespectful, arbitrary, and sometimes clearly racist. As noted, Lebanese workers received long shifts, were fired arbitrarily, and lacked effective representation, and skilled Lebanese employees like Shāmī's colleagues in the communications room were required to perform menial tasks not required of Americans or Europeans of equal skill levels.⁸⁴

Shāmī's complaints and unionization drive were not unusual for the time. Since the early 1950s, Lebanese workers had repeatedly struck to

secure 8-hour days and safeguards against termination.⁸⁵ A wave of inflation sparked strikes for wage increases throughout the early 1960s, including a mass strike in 1961 for a nationwide raise.⁸⁶ Lebanon's petroleum sector, initially shielded from mobilization by foreign oil companies' insulation from labor laws, had also begun to organize: the Lebanese workforces of Mobil, Shell, IPC, Sonoco, and Lepco were all unionized by the early 1960s, and in January 1963 workers staged a mass strike in Tripoli following IPC's attempt to fire several hundred employees from its facilities there.⁸⁷ George Ṣaqr, president of Mobil Oil's white-collar union since the mid-1950s, had also been pushing to mobilize Lebanese petroleum workers, and helped Shāmī organize Tapline's workforce.

Yet although Tapline workers aimed to improve their pay and benefits, Shāmī's reported motive for unionizing was not that compensation was insufficient, but rather that skilled Lebanese workers were not being treated as the equals of American and European employees.⁸⁸ Dissatisfied with labor conditions at Tapline, Shāmī began studying law at night school with the intention of quitting his job. Ironically, this industriousness apparently impressed Tapline President W.R. Chandler, who admired Shāmī's "achievement in holding down a steady job, supporting a family of five and winning a law degree by virtue of attending night classes," in the words of a U.S. Embassy report. Instead, after graduating Shami used his knowledge of the law to file a unionization request with the Ministry of Labor in 1963 to form the Tapline Laborers' Syndicate (*Niqābat 'Ummāl al-Tāblayn*) at Zahrani and begin rectifying the inequalities he perceived.⁸⁹ Though the union did not challenge capitalism itself or the presence of foreign capital within Lebanon, it did assert its autonomy from its American managers, insist on the equitable treatment of Lebanese workers, and used anti-colonial nationalist discourse to make those claims.

This was no easy task: unionizing Tapline's diverse Lebanese workforce required mobilization across sectarian and collar lines. As noted, Tapline's unions included employees of diverse sectarian backgrounds. Beirut headquarters was largely Christian, much of the Zahrani terminal was Shī'ī, and some were supporters of the Sunnī, Arab nationalist Sidon MP Ma'rif Sa'd. Shāmī himself was Catholic, and when he founded the Zahrani union, some Muslim employees reportedly expressed concern that the syndicate was a sectarian, Christian-only organization. They feared that unionization would lead to the firing of nonunion—meaning Muslim—employees. Shāmī claims that he won the local Director of Social Affairs over by bringing 15 of the politician's Muslim, pro-union supporters to a

meeting between the two of them, demonstrating the Zahrani syndicate's nonsectarian basis. The union's bylaws also explicitly rejected the principle of sectarian quotas in filling leadership positions, building its anti-sectarian orientation into its organizational structure.⁹⁰

Collar lines also divided Tapline's Lebanese workforce. Shāmī was a college-educated, English-speaking, high-skilled worker but the majority of his peers at Zahrani were not—and the union he led had to wrest concrete gains from management. Indeed, although grievances based around the unequal treatment of Lebanese employees provided the impetus for Shāmī's unionization drive, workers from non-elite backgrounds quickly used the syndicate as a means of receiving welfare the company had denied them. For example, Muḥammad Fu'ād Khabbāz, who had lost his leg in a workplace accident and was eventually terminated, brought his case to Shāmī's attention, requesting the union's assistance in securing further compensation and lifelong care for his debilitating injury.⁹¹ The syndicate served as a means of rectifying the grievances of Lebanese employees of disparate socioeconomic backgrounds, rooted in expectations of equal treatment and lifelong care, structured by decades of Lebanese labor activism and by Tapline's own managerial discourse and practices.

Indeed, when Tapline management learned of the employees' intention to establish a union, it relied on a paternalistic strategy of corporate welfare to prevent labor disputes, toward which it had a policy of "complete inflexibility" in order to avoid higher labor costs.⁹² Management circulated a memorandum to employees before the unionization vote took place that argued against the use of a secret ballot and reflected the company's paternalistic stance toward labor, stating that "it is natural for us to think of the employees' welfare, since that is also Tapline's welfare.... Tapline does not agree that you need a syndicate for protection since Management has always provided that protection."⁹³ The memorandum continued to argue that labor conditions at Tapline were superior to those of unionized workplaces due to management's concern for workers' well-being and its willingness to listen, listing benefits like an employees' club, medical care, and an expanded loan plan, and arguing that although Tapline employees worked only 40 hours per week rather than the national average of 48, wages were far higher at Tapline than in comparable positions in Lebanon.⁹⁴ Finally, in a strikingly direct expression of paternalism, the memorandum contended that the company constituted a single family, and that unionization would tear apart that family.⁹⁵

Tapline's arguments were apparently not convincing, and employees at Zahrani voted to unionize. For its part, the Tapline Laborers' Syndicate construed its confrontation with management in anti-colonial nationalist terms to unite its diverse constituency in opposition to managers' mistreatment of Lebanese employees. In its first pamphlet the syndicate accused "the colonialist Tapline company" of making 700,000 Lebanese *lira* in profit daily, but refusing to pay the equivalent of 2 hours' profit in bonuses to its Lebanese workforce—one of the union's first demands, made in tandem with other Lebanese petroleum workers—and, instead, spending 300,000 *lira* on anti-union propaganda.⁹⁶ When union members were expelled from Tapline's premises following a demonstration in late 1963, the syndicate's second pamphlet argued that they had been removed from the Lebanese soil of Tapline's facilities "as if they were not Lebanese."⁹⁷ The union did not involve itself in formal anti-imperialist politics, and publicly thanked a sympathetic American manager who was apparently fired for not preventing the workforce from unionizing. Still, the syndicate's first public statement strongly emphasized anti-colonial nationalist themes: Tapline's foreignness, its unwillingness to distribute its immense wealth equitably to its Lebanese employees, and its antagonism toward Lebanese workers on Lebanese soil.⁹⁸

The Zahrani union's anti-sectarian and cross-collar basis allowed it to also quickly organize Beirut headquarters by early 1964.⁹⁹ Shāmī's Christian background and AUB pedigree likely made unionization at his initiative appealing to the largely Christian, white-collar employees at headquarters. The Beirut union's name, the "Tapline Employees' Syndicate" (*Niqābat Muwazzafi al-Tāblayn*), explicitly suggested that it represented Tapline's white-collar administrative workforce, as opposed to the blue-collar "laborers" ("*Ummāl*") of Zahrani. Like the Laborers' Syndicate, the Employees' Syndicate's bylaws also rejected the principle of sectarian representation.¹⁰⁰ The close alliance between the Zahrani and Beirut unions underlined organized Tapline workers' anti-sectarian and cross-collar basis.

Tapline's hierarchical tendencies and the discriminatory practices of some of its American managers, which contradicted the egalitarianism of the company's rhetoric and some of its practices, were the impetus for the formation of the Tapline Laborers' Syndicate. Unionized workers quickly used this organization to meet expectations of company intervention in their welfare. Unionization constituted a response to grievances engendered by the company's violation of the expectations it had itself helped foster in its

employees—as well as Lebanon’s long history of labor activism—and served as an avenue to begin rectifying those grievances and improving the terms of Lebanese employees’ labor. Tapline’s union employed anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric to unify the company’s diverse Lebanese workforce around the struggle to make Tapline meet the expectations of equality and paternalistic care it had encouraged in its employees. As will be shown, unionization consolidated those employees’ shared control over the technical systems necessary to Tapline’s operation, empowering them to force change.

THE 1964 PETROLEUM WORKERS’ STRIKE

In 1964, the new syndicates played a critical role in a nationwide petroleum workers’ strike, demonstrating the vulnerability of Tapline and Lebanon’s energy distribution system as a whole to local and mass mobilization. Ten unions from across the Lebanese oil sector demanded an industry-wide raise, resonating with calls throughout the early 1960s for a nationwide raise in response to increased inflation. As will be shown, the 1964 petroleum workers’ strike would secure more equitable terms of labor for Lebanese Tapline workers and demonstrate their positional power. Though the immediate goal of this strike was higher pay, the strikers’ rhetoric showed that Lebanese workers saw the raise as part of a struggle for equality. Ironically, Tapline’s Lebanese unions won important concessions and significant autonomy from a company they construed as behaving in colonialist fashion, while ultimately tightening the paternalistic embrace of its particular variety of welfare capitalism.

The specific vulnerabilities of Tapline and Lebanon’s energy distribution network were central to Lebanese petroleum workers’ power. Though Timothy Mitchell contends in *Carbon Democracy* that at the global scale petroleum tends to be distributed in flexible, redundant, grid-like networks, at the scale of the Lebanese nation-state the petroleum distribution system resembled the vulnerable and inflexible “dendritic networks” that Mitchell argues are characteristic of coal, “with branches at each end but a single main channel, creating potential chokepoints at several junctures...”¹⁰¹ Tapline’s Lebanese employees controlled flows of information and oil that were critical to the pipeline’s operation, and Tapline’s infrastructure in Lebanon—which was critical to the transportation of energy into and through the country—was vulnerable to local and mass strike action. On a national scale, Tapline was one of Lebanon’s two sources of

oil and links between Tapline employees and other Lebanese petroleum workers allowed coordination to threaten the distribution of petroleum energy through the country. The resulting vulnerabilities gave Lebanese Tapline workers the ability to threaten the flow of energy via Lebanon and, therefore, to press their demands.

Tapline workers, acting in concert across lines of collar and sect, controlled critical chokepoints in the flow of energy through Lebanon. As noted, the president of the new Tapline Laborers' Syndicate at Zahrani was a radio technician in the facility's communications room. This office controlled the flow of information and the regulation of oil pressure across the entire pipeline system. Shāmī was also an AUB-educated Christian, but led a union whose members included less-educated employees of diverse socioeconomic and sectarian backgrounds who worked alongside him to maintain system-wide communications, and performed other critical work that included connecting oil tankers to Zahrani's offshore terminal system and offloading crude oil onto them. These particular positions were especially critical to the Lebanese economy, since Tapline provided Lebanon with much of its fuel and government revenue. Further, links between the Zahrani union and other Lebanese petroleum workers allowed coordination to threaten the distribution of petroleum energy through Lebanon: the flow of information through the Zahrani radio room that regulated the pumping of oil, and the flow of oil from Tapline's storage tanks to Mediterranean tankers. The Tapline Laborers' Syndicate at Zahrani had helped form the Beirut headquarters' mainly white-collar Tapline Employees' Syndicate, linking the two sites' technical and administrative workforces with their somewhat disparate class and sectarian bases.¹⁰² Tapline employees at Zahrani also had social links with employees of the adjacent Medreco refinery and organizational links with George Şaqr's union of employees of Mobil Oil's distribution branch in Lebanon. Tapline's diverse Lebanese workforce itself controlled much of the flow of energy through Lebanon, but was also embedded within a nationwide network of petroleum workers that extended across other critical points within the sector.

In the 1964 petroleum workers' strike, union coordination extended across Lebanon's "dendritic" petroleum distribution system. Workers from the Tapline and IPC pipelines, the Zahrani and Tripoli refineries, and Beirut's airport joined a strike committee that included Lebanese employees of Mobil Oil, Shell, IPC, Lepco, and Total under George Şaqr's leadership to press for an industry-wide annual bonus again framed as a

13th month of pay, equivalent to an 8.33% raise.¹⁰³ The “13th month” had long been a project of Şaqr’s, who noted that his own employer, Mobil Oil, had been offering an additional month of pay every year to its employees in Cyprus. A general strike was to open in stages if the companies failed to meet this demand, aiming to disrupt foreign companies’ operations rather than the Lebanese economy itself and starting with local strikes by employees of fuel distributors Shell and Mobil Oil.¹⁰⁴ The strikers vowed to continue supplying critical services and facilities including hospitals and the military, permitted local Lebanese distributors to service gas stations previously supplied by Shell and Mobil Oil, and secured a commitment by the Private Drivers’ Union not to purchase gasoline from foreign companies targeted by the strike. On the strike’s first day, a demonstration at the Beirut airport delayed Mobil Oil and Shell tanker trucks, blocking more than half of the ordinary daily fuel delivery. In an attempt to marshal business and political leaders against the strikers, Lebanon’s petroleum companies announced that they could no longer guarantee that airplanes would be refueled at Beirut.¹⁰⁵ In response, workers at IPC’s Tripoli refinery threatened to stop filling tanker trucks altogether.¹⁰⁶

The specter of expanding strike action spurred a round of government-mediated negotiations between the companies and the strike committee. When these talks failed, Mobil Oil and Shell employees resumed their strike, and Tapline’s twin unions at Zahrani and Beirut announced their intentions to close the pipeline.¹⁰⁷ Tapline employees’ direct participation in the 1964 strike was brief, but it signaled a major escalation: in the early 1960s Tapline accounted for roughly half of the crude oil that passed through Lebanon, and the Medreco facility processed Tapline petroleum into roughly half of the gasoline required for domestic Lebanese consumption by 1964.¹⁰⁸ According to an observer at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, the Lebanese government was “[faced] with the possibility of a shutdown of practically the entire petroleum” industry, and President Ḥilū—inaugurated in the middle of the strike—appealed to U.S. Embassy officials for assistance in convincing the companies to moderate their positions to avert crisis.¹⁰⁹

Though the strike in which they participated focused on an industry-wide wage increase, the rhetoric employed by Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate’s made clear that its members saw their actions as part of a struggle for equality. The Zahrani union circulated a number of pamphlets that emphasized the gap between Tapline’s egalitarian rhetoric and its

hierarchical practices. Despite Ṣaqr's promise to the U.S. Embassy to avoid anti-U.S. and anti-British rhetoric, one set of pamphlets accused the Zahrani terminal's superintendent, who was also the intermediary between management and the company-dominated workers' councils, of racial discrimination akin to that prevalent in the U.S. south.¹¹⁰ Workers also picketed along the road leading to the Zahrani facility's entrance, holding signs that protested workplace inequality in nationalist terms. One held aloft an English-language sign that read, "10 Americans are paid more than our 200 laborers."¹¹¹ This rhetoric united Tapline's Lebanese religiously and socioeconomically diverse workforce in opposition to unequal treatment by management, linked this local struggle to broader national and even international struggles for equality, and helped weld workers into a political force capable of blocking the flow of energy.

Though Tapline's first strike on September 15 ended for legal reasons within one day, the threat to halt Tapline precipitated government intervention in the unions' favor. Parliamentarians Ma'rūf Sa'd and Jamīl Laḥūd, as well as the PSP's *al-Anbā'* and the Katā'ib-affiliated *al-ʿAmal*, publicly announced support for the strikers, though the corporatist and pro-U.S. Katā'ib expressed concern about the strike's impact on oil companies.¹¹² The risk of the pipeline's closure led to arbitration by Prime Minister Hussayn al-ʿUwaynī, who negotiated the Zahrani union down from closing Tapline, citing the dire effects the pipeline's shutdown would have on Lebanon's economy.¹¹³ Government intervention on the unions' behalf quickly followed, and petroleum workers won a 6% raise, ending Lebanon's longest strike since independence.¹¹⁴

Following the 1963–1964 unionizations and the 1964 petroleum workers' strike, Lebanese Tapline workers consolidated their power. The Zahrani and Beirut unions helped organize the workers of the adjacent Medreco refinery and formalized their relationship with other Lebanese petroleum workers' unions under a national Federation of Syndicates of Petroleum Employees and Laborers (*Ittihād Niqābāt Muwazzafi wa ʿUmmāl al-Bitrūl*). Led by Mobil Oil's George Ṣaqr, this union confederation helped petroleum workers cement their positional power vis-à-vis their employers and take a leading role in the Lebanese labor movement. From 1964 to the mid-1970s, unionized Tapline workers and their allies used their control over chokepoints in Lebanon's energy distribution system to continue to improve the terms of their labor.

In a 1966 strike pamphlet, the Tapline Laborers' Syndicate quoted the company's Marshall Plan-style slogan: "Petroleum is a means for a better

life,” and responded with a radical question: “A better life for whom?”¹¹⁵ Unionization allowed Lebanese Tapline employee workers to redress their grievances, rooted in expectations of equal treatment and substantial investment in employee welfare. Though a full account of their gains is outside of the scope of this essay, the Zahrani and Beirut syndicates won raises, greater workplace autonomy, fought for more equal treatment in the workplace, defended union members’ jobs, pressed for improved medical care, and were even able to secure preferential hiring for their children.¹¹⁶ This would have cemented a multi-generational labor and welfare-provision relationship between the company and its employees’ families. Tapline employees also maintained the union’s nonsectarian orientation by continuing to reject a communal quota system, employed anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric while electing a Palestinian as Beirut union president and protecting a European employee’s job after he refused to help break a strike, and challenged the petroleum federation’s relatively conservative leadership by pushing its member unions to mobilize more aggressively.¹¹⁷ Lebanese Tapline workers used the power they held over the flow of oil to improve workers’ lots by asserting worker autonomy and achieving a more equitable distribution of power and resources, while deepening the company’s commitment to their well-being.

CONCLUSION

Lebanese employees of Tapline occupied key chokepoints in the flow of petroleum through Lebanon’s “dendritic” energy distribution system. They were, therefore, able to mobilize across collar and sect lines to gain control over a critical component of Lebanon’s energy infrastructure and force their employers to make concessions. Shared grievances against American managers and the requirement of cross-collar, anti-sectarian cooperation to assert control over Tapline’s technical systems encouraged union members to couch their demands in anti-colonial nationalist terms, resonating with a long legacy of anti-colonial Lebanese labor activism. Yet these demands were not anti-capitalist or even opposed in principle to foreign capital’s presence in Lebanon, and also resonated with more egalitarian currents in Tapline’s welfare capitalism. Tapline employees’ positional power, and concerted action by diverse workers occupying distinct critical positions in the pipeline’s operations, strengthened their ability to extract concessions from management while also pulling them deeper into its paternalistic embrace.

NOTES

1. This tendency is strong in the vast historiography of the global petroleum industry. Some better known works that share it, but were written with distinct methodologies and subject matters, include Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2009); Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London: Verso, 2009); Toby C. Jones, *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); and Myrna I. Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
2. See, for instance, Bruce Podobnik, *Global Energy Shifts: Fostering Sustainability in a Turbulent Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2006) and Steven Hurst, *The United States and Iraq since 1979: Hegemony, Oil and War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).
3. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso Books, 2011), 7–8, 31–39.
4. Rania Ghosn, “Geographies of Energy” (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 2010).
5. Throughout this chapter, I will use the IJMES transliteration system for Arabic names transliterated from Arabic-language sources, except when citing authors of English-language scholarship. When citing English-language sources with their own transliterations of Arabic names, I will preserve that transliteration within quotation marks. For place names, I will use the common English spelling.
6. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), 213–238.
7. Ghosn, “Geographies of Energy,” 48–53.
8. Yergin, *The Prize*, 392.
9. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 31; David Painter, “Oil and the Marshall Plan,” *The Business History Review* 58, no. 3 (1984): 361–362; Yergin, *The Prize*, 409–412.
10. Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 35.
11. Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 117.
12. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 55–59.
13. Carolyn Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy* (London: Center for Lebanese Studies, 1998), 82.

14. Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, 102–104.
15. By the late 1940s, the Iraq Petroleum Company already operated a pipeline and exported petroleum to Lebanon, and provided a large proportion of the country's fuel supply.
16. This amount was increased in 1952 to \$600,000 annually, and then to a 50/50 profit-sharing agreement between Tapline and all transit states including Saudi Arabia in 1962–1963. Ghosn, "Geographies of Energy," 58, 149–150.
17. Youssef Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 74; Douglas Little, "Pipeline Politics: America, TAPLINE, and the Arabs," *The Business History Review* 64, no. 2 (1990): 268; Ghosn, "Geographies of Energy," 59.
18. Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon*, 85–87.
19. Tapline's throughput was originally 350,000 barrels per day, but was upgraded to 450,000 per day by 1958. Tapline, "Kilometer 1213: Tapline Today," (promotional material, Tapline, 1961); Ghalib al-Turk, "The South," in *Lebanon and Its Provinces: A Study by the Governors of the Five Provinces*, ed. Halim Said Abu-Izzedin (Beirut: Kayats, 1963), 73–90.
20. Interview with anonymous former Tapline employee, July 2013.
21. Tapline, "Tapline: Modern Trade Route of Steel," 3, <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/380/388/tapline/ancient-lands/index.html>.
22. Petroleum Attache to U.S. Embassy in Beirut Nestor Ortiz to Charge d'Affairs John Bruins, "The Middle East Pipeline Agreements: A Review and Appraisal of Their Current Status and Suggested Approach for Attaining Policy Objectives," August 4, 1953 RG 59, Decimal File 1950–1954, 883A.2553/12-2352 to 883A.392/7-1752 (Stack 250), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland; Interview with anonymous former Tapline employee, July 2013; DeGolyer and MacNaughton, *Twentieth-Century Petroleum Statistics 2009* (Dallas: DeGolyer and MacNaughton, 2009); John Bowlus, "Connecting Midstream: The Politics and Economics of Oil Transportation in the Middle East" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2014), 38; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, Volume IX, Part 1: The Near and Middle East, document 303, "Memorandum of Conversation," July 28, 1953.
23. Interview with anonymous former Tapline employee, July 2013.
24. Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Midfield: United States Intervention in Lebanon, 1945–1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 45.
25. Tapline, "Tapline: A Report on Five Years of Successful Operation," *The Petroleum Engineer* (April 1956), <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/380/388/tapline/petroleum-engineer/index.html#10>.

26. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, August 1953; Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, August 1958; Barre Ludvigsen, in conversation with the author, June 27, 2013.
27. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 97; Ghosn, "Geographies of Energy," 156.
28. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, August 1953.
29. Raja' Iliya, e-mail messages to author, January–February 2015; Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, April 1953.
30. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 96.
31. Ayyüb Shāmī, conversations with author, July 15, 2013 and August 14, 2013.
32. A.A. Brickhouse, "Tapline's Sidon Terminal," *World Petroleum* (June 1957), <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/380/388/tapline/sidon/brickhouse/>; Ludvigsen, conversation with author.
33. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, August 1958; Shāmī, conversations with author; Ghosn, "Geographies of Energy," 170–171.
34. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, March–April 1954.
35. Tapline, "Tapline: A Report on Five Years of Successful Operation."
36. Tapline, "Tapline: A Report on Five Years of Successful Operation"; Tapline, "The Story of Tapline (*Qiṣṣat Tāblāyn*)." <http://almashriq.hiof.no/>; Tapline, "Tapline: Modern Trade Route of Steel," 10, <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/380/388/tapline/ancient-lands/index.html>.
37. Aramco, *Aramco World* (September–October 1966): 32.
38. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 151–155.
39. Shami, e-mail messages to the author, June 2016.
40. *al-'Amal*, September 5, 1964.
41. Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 101.
42. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 100.
43. Ilyās al-Buwārī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaraka al-'Ummāliyya wa-l-Niqābiyya fi Lubnān: 1947–1970, Volume 2* (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 1986), 7.
44. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 57, 117.
45. *Ibid.*, 117; al-Buwārī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaraka al-'Ummāliyya, Volume 2*, 27.
46. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 164.
47. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 160–167; Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 35–56, 236–262.
48. Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 160–167.
49. *Ibid.*

50. Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 19–23.
51. Ghosn, "Geographies of Energy," 136–140.
52. See, for instance, Sarah M. A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
53. Ludvigsen, conversation with author.
54. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, December 1956; Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, February 1957.
55. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, December 1956.
56. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, November 1953.
57. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, March 1953.
58. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, January–February 1954; Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, December 1954; Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, July–August 1954.
59. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, March 1953.
60. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, August–November 1955.
61. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, May 1953.
62. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, December 1954.
63. See, for example, al-Buwārī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaraka al-'Ummāliyya, Volume 2*, 81–82, 99, 117, 120, 127.
64. Cyrus Schayegh, "1958 Reconsidered: State Formation and the Cold War in the Early Postcolonial Arab Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 3 (2013): 432.
65. Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, September 1956; Tapline, *Pipeline Periscope*, February 1957; Brickhouse, "Tapline's Sidon Terminal."
66. Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 171–173.
67. Aramco, "Loan Assistance Program," (undated internal memorandum, Aramco); Ghosn, "Geographies of Energy," 138–139.
68. Tapline, "Tapline Position Paper," (undated internal memorandum, Tapline).
69. John O' Hagan to Muḥammad Fu'ād Khabbāz (letter, John O' Hagan, December 7, 1963).
70. Ibid.
71. Shāmī, conversations with author.
72. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 213–214.
73. Ibid., 218.
74. al-Buwārī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaraka al-'Ummāliyya, Volume 2*, 107–108.
75. Ibid., 136–139.
76. Schayegh, "1958 Reconsidered", 433.
77. Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 138–144.
78. al-Buwārī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaraka al-'Ummāliyya, Volume 2*, 225.
79. Ibid., 81–82.

80. Ibid., 139–140.
81. Betty Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 136.
82. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 136.
83. Kamāl Junblāt, *Ḥaḡīqat al-Thawra al-Lubnāniyya* (Beirut: al-Dār al-Taḡaddumiyya, 1987), 97–99.
84. Shāmī, conversations with author.
85. al-Buwārī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaraka al-Ummāliyya, Volume 2*.
86. Ibid., 183, 196–199, 229.
87. Ibid., 140–144, 176–177, 184–186.
88. Shāmī, conversations with author.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. John O’ Hagan to Muḡammad Fu’ād Khabbāz (letter, John O’ Hagan, December 7, 1963).
92. Ghosn, “Geographies of Energy,” 166.
93. “Tapline Position Paper.” Unpublished documents.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, “To Lebanese Public Opinion (1 of 2),” (leaflet, Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, 1963).
97. Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, “To Lebanese Public Opinion (2 of 2),” (leaflet, Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, 1963).
98. Although the Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate employed anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric in its first pamphlets and placards, and although it had good relations with the Arab nationalist MP Ma’rūf Sa’d, it was not affiliated with Lebanon’s Nasserist movement, as Ghosn suggests. Ghosn, “Geographies of Energy,” 160.
99. Shāmī, conversations with author.
100. Ibid.
101. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 38.
102. Shāmī, conversations with author.
103. *al-‘Amal*, September 4, 1964. This was framed as a demand for a 13th month of wages paid at the end of each year, an annual bonus that amounted to an 8.33% salary increase.
104. *al-Nahār*, October 4, 1964; Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 99.
105. *al-‘Amal*, September 5, 1964.
106. *al-‘Amal*, September 9, 1964.
107. *al-Nahār*, October 4, 1964.
108. Tapline throughput reached 439,000 barrels per day in 1964, compared to the IPC line’s 445,000 barrels per day in 1960. The IPC refinery at Tripoli accounted for roughly 55% of premium gasoline sales and 56% of regular

- gasoline sales in Lebanon in 1964, with Tapline crude processed at Medreco likely making up almost all of the remainder. Interview with anonymous former Tapline employee, July 2013; Iraq Petroleum Company—Lebanon, “General Information on Pipeline & Terminal—Lebanon and Tripoli Refinery,” 1970, <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/380/388/ipc/ipc-gi-1970/index.html>.
109. U.S. Embassy in Beirut to U.S. Department of State, “Petroleum Workers’ Strike Continues,” September 25, 1964; “President Helou Seeks Quick Settlement of Oil Strike,” September 30, 1964; “Petroleum Workers’ Strike Ends,” October 14, 1964; RG 59, Central Policy Files 1964–1966, Box 1309, NARA.
 110. Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, “To the Management of the Tapline Company,” (leaflet, Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, 1964); Brickhouse, “Tapline’s Sidon Terminal”; Ludvigsen, conversation with the author.
 111. Photograph provided to author by Ayyūb Shāmī.
 112. *al-ʿAmal*, September 5 and 20, 1964; *al-Anbaʿ*, September 19, 1964.
 113. Ghosn notes that the company suggested to the Lebanese government that a shutdown would cost Lebanon 35,000 *lira* daily. Ghosn, “Geographies of Energy,” 160; Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 58, 83; Shāmī, conversations with author.
 114. *al-Nahār*, October 4, 1964.
 115. Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, “Statement number 2: Petroleum is a means to a better life,” (leaflet, Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, 1966).
 116. Shāmī, conversations with author.
 117. U.S. Embassy in Beirut to U.S. Department of State, “Tapline Labor Dispute Nears Solution,” April 6, 1966; U.S. Embassy in Beirut to U.S. Department of State, “Tapline Strike,” December 6, 1966 RG 59, Central Policy Files 1964–1966, Box 1309, NARA; Shāmī, conversations with author; Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, “Statement number 3: Petroleum is a means to a better life,” (leaflet, Tapline Laborers’ Syndicate, 1966).