

# I-69 Resistance

or, how a ragtag bunch of  
farmers, anarchists and ecologists  
fought against a  
multi-billion-dollar  
infrastructure project  
for two decades





# A few of the things we did:

**1990:** The first grassroots organizations against I-69, including Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads, form in rural areas of Indiana.

**1999** November 4 - Police disperse a Bloomington rally held in solidarity with the anti-WTO protests in Seattle. At the rally, organized by Buffalo Trace Earth First!, the Indiana Forest Alliance, and Education for a Sustainable Future, a modified I- 69 sign is burned. The crowd chants “Burn the WTO!” and “One struggle, one fight: ecology and workers’ rights!”

**2000** September 9 - “Late Friday night, the Earth Liberation Front paid a visit to the GOP headquarters in Bloomington, Indiana leaving it in flames as we left. The fire was set as a reminder to politicians such as John Hostettler that we are watching and that we will not sit idly by as they push for plans like I-69. The construction would fill the coffers of Multinational Corporations at the expense of the environment and of working people everywhere. I-69 is just one example of the willingness of the rich to bleed the Earth and the working class to fulfill their money lust. We have no faith in the present system of electoral politics where every candidate both Republican and Democrat is funded with corporate blood money. Because there are no viable options on the ballot, we must find another means of voting. Our non-participation in and active resistance against this system, controlled by the rich, is our means of voting. We are everywhere and nowhere.”

**2002** August 20 - 600 people pack an I-69 public meeting at a Bloomington high school. During the meeting, police are repeatedly called in, first to extract anti-I-69 residents who will not remain silent and then to escort to safety pro-I-69 speakers, who are threatened by the angry crowd.

**2003** April 26 - Two Bloomington activists are arrested for trespassing as they attempt to drop a gigantic banner off of a developer’s construction crane. The banner reads “I- 69 benefits who? Them, not you!”

**2004** July 8 - Members of the Indiana Forest Alliance begin to hold a weekly vigil and demonstration at an I-69 office in downtown Bloomington. The vigils continue for many months.



## 2005

October 22 - 400 people rally in Indianapolis against I-69. Farmers from southern Indiana arrive in tractors, deliberately serving on the way as a slowly-moving blockade of the roads earmarked for conversion into I-69. Local anarchists carry a banner highlighting I-69’s “Imperial Design,” linking it to the highway construction plans in Central America contained in the Plan Puebla Panama. While members of the political coalition against I-69 deliver a petition to the Statehouse, anarchists and members of the Bloomington Circus Collective lead a festive breakaway march of 150-200 people, blocking traffic throughout Indianapolis’ city-center.

May 21 - A few groups co-sponsor a picnic in Washington, IN, a small town that will be destroyed by I-69. People involved in Roadless Summer from Indianapolis bring food and root beer kegs to a park to have fun and facilitate discussions between anarchists and local organizers.



May 26 - Members of CARR are ejected from the Oakland City Indiana Department of Transportation public information meeting. Also, a confrontation emerges between public relations representatives from Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates Inc. (the primary firm backing I-69 in Indiana) and Roadless Summer participants.

Throughout May - There are several office demonstrations targeted against the two Bloomington I-69 planning offices, one of which is operated by DLZ (a firm involved in engineering work for I-69) and the other by BLA. A local newspaper reports that at one office demonstration, an electric noisemaker (making a “loud, shrilling fire-alarm sound”) is left hidden in an office, shutting down work until it is found and disabled in water. Later, one person faces felony charges for one of these actions, having been accused of stealing a confidential notebook while inside an office. There is also news coverage of a grafitti campaign that left anti-I-69 slogans on walls and stop signs across Bloomington.

June 4 - Nearly 100 people march against I-69 and the Plan Puebla Panama in Indianapolis. After taking the streets, the crowd storms the Indiana Statehouse. Nearly \$3,000 of damage is done when its antique limestone walls and marble pillars are covered in spray-painted slogans such as “I-69 is the enemy.” At least 1 person is un-arrested as the crowd moves away from the statehouse, though 24 are later rounded up once police reinforcements arrive.

June 16 - More than 200 people attend the Indiana Department of Transportation public information meeting outside of Bloomington. INDOT representatives are ridiculed and shouted down by the vast majority of the crowd, and Earth First!ers drop banners simultaneously around the meeting hall. It is later revealed that the Bloomington Police Department had nearly 100 riot police on alert at a nearby staging point because of previous serious disturbances at public information meetings.



June 24-30 - Roadless Summer participants take a bike tour along the proposed route of I-69, between Bloomington and Evansville. Along the way, they talk with people in affected communities and distribute information about the highway and its connections to capitalist globalization.

July 10 - A number of people have a night-time demonstration at the rural home of a BLA manager.

July 16 - About 150 people join a night march in Bloomington. Minor confrontations with the police occur near the downtown I-69 planning office, where other activists also drop a large banner. Later, demonstrators drag newspaper boxes into the street to slow the police pursuit of the march. Local liberal punks respond by removing the barricades and protecting corporate property! No arrests are made after the march disperses, though many people are pursued and some are detained.

July 17 - More than a dozen people have a Sunday-night demonstration at the house of Tom Sharp, the INDOT commissioner, in Indianapolis' suburbs. Demonstrators go door to door informing his neighbors of his activities in planning a very unpopular highway, while others chalk his driveway.

July 18 - A series of office invasions occur in Indianapolis, against DLZ and Hetrick, a firm contracted by BLA to do public relations work for I-69. It is later revealed that the Hetrick office went on permanent lock-down following this action.

July 19 - The Bloomington west side I-69 planning office is attacked. The incident included a failed attempt at arson using multiple improvised Molotov cocktails. Approximately \$5,000 in damage is done.

July 30 - Two anarchists interrupt politicians at an an INDOT meeting in Greenfield, Indiana, by shouting and unfurling a banner. Greenfield is not on I-69's route, but residents are fighting two other road projects, and local residents join a picket formed outside of the meeting.

August 16 - There are a series of office invasions and home demos in Evansville, Indiana. More than 20 people attempt to invade the headquarters of Bernardin, Lochmueller, and Associates, and are met by company officials who are prepared for them. Confrontations occur as BLA management staff attempt to break through the activists' banner and photograph them. Later that night, home demos occur against the homes of a number of BLA high-level management.

August 25 - There is a joint day of action against Huntington Life Sciences [a multinational vivisection corporation] and I-69 in Cincinnati, OH. There are a number of office demos, including one against the local DLZ and Hetrick office.



## 2007

July 8 - In response to the first evictions of farmers' homes and land for I-69, Earth First! staged a statewide day of action. "Hayduke's Moving Company," a coordination of Earth First! action groups, moved the contents out of I-69 planning offices and into the street in Petersburg and Oakland City, while activists shut down the I-69 planning office on West State Road 48 in Bloomington. "Earth First!ers dropped a banner that read 'Stop I-69' onto its roof and 50 people assembled outside in protest. ...The downtown Bloomington section 5 office was the subject of two demonstrations: a small office invasion at 2:30 p.m. and a raucous march of 40 people at 4 p.m. Additionally, Earth First!ers hung more banners across Bloomington, one of which read 'For our farms, forests and futures - Resist I-69.' ...Until evictions and construction are brought to a halt, individuals will continue to struggle in defense of their homes and against a superhighway project that will not benefit any of the communities of southwest Indiana."

Two people were later charged with felony racketeering for these actions.



August 21 - an INDOT meeting at Bloomington North High School is hijacked and shut down by I-69 opponents.

The I-69 Listening Project was founded in late 2007. Over the next year, its participants interviewed dozens of farmers being displaced by the road, in the hope of recording the memories and histories of communities facing destruction.

## 2008

April 18-22: A new round of resistance to the construction of I-69 kicked off. Road opponents held an unpermitted march in Bloomington on April 19 and many people calling in for the April 22 phone jam action reported receiving busy signals. On the same day, banners were hung from freeway overpasses opposing the new highway. A base camp was set up near the construction zones in order to host resistance activities including community organizing dialogues and distribution of literature, documentation of the proposed route and any destructive acts committed by INDOT, wildlife surveying and support for direct action against construction.

May 19 - The River City Animal Defense League protested at the houses of two men involved in the construction of I-69. The first protest targeted the house of a Gohmann Asphalt and Construction contractor Michael J Gohmann. The second took place at the house of Gohmann executive John R Gohmann. The protesters vowed to return until Gohmann ends its involvement in I-69.

June 5 - "Morning commuters going west on I-64 in Louisville, Kentucky were greeted with a display from Anti-I-69 road activists. The display coincides with the ongoing struggle to stop I-69 in southern Indiana. Currently, anti-I-69 activists throughout the country are Committed to fight against the NAFTA superhighway, which will displace hardworking Indiana farmers, aid in the outsourcing of jobs, and destroy thousands of acres of forest and wetlands."

June 11 - Masked protesters invaded an I-69 Project Office in Bloomington, reportedly chalking both the inside and outside of the office and shattering the glass pane of an entry door. Roadblock Earth First! responded to the incident by saying, "We'd like to thank these anonymous folks who threw down against I-69 from the bottom of our collective hearts. Roadblock EarthFirst! is an organizing collective dedicated to employing non-violent direct-action tactics to guarantee the failure of the NAFTA Superhighway."

May 18 til June 19 - "In the waning hours of Sunday May 18th, dedicated community members in resistance to I-69 set up a defensive encampment high in the trees above the farmland that INDOT and [then-governor] Mitch Daniels consider the future site of the NAFTA Superhighway." Police immediately arrived to harass the treesitters and their supporters, but withdrew without making any arrests. They claimed that they would leave the treesit alone, and that road construction was not expected to reach that site in the near future. The encampment lasted nearly a month before being evicted by a massive multi-department police action; 6 additional people were arrested during the eviction, after a high-speed pursuit as they allegedly drove to the treesit. In the wake of the eviction, activists throughout Southern Indiana were increasingly followed and hassled by local, state and federal police.





June 20 - Around 3:30 p.m., in response to the eviction of the tree-sit along the proposed route of I-69 and the reckless and dangerous arrest of the tree-sitters and their supporters, opponents of the highway converged upon the I-69 planning office in Bloomington, Indiana. Armed only with whistles, signs, and shouts of rage, these opponents of the interstate raised a ruckus in the lobby, chanting “I-69, shut it down! Michael J. Baker out of our town!”

June 20 - Demo in solidarity with the evicted treesit at the INDOT office in Gary, Indiana.

June 21 - Torches lit up the night sky at the Saturday “vengeance march” in response to the treesit eviction. 100-150 marchers carried banners, banged drums and set off bottle rockets. ...As they passed the jail they taunted the police with “no more roads, no more jails,” “you can’t put our friends in jail, we will drive the final nail,” and “we will win!” Many bystanders joined the action.

June 23 - Kalamazoo, MI: Protesters bearing drums and whistles paraded through the offices of DLZ Corporation, an engineering firm involved in I-69 construction and planning.

June 23 - A crowd of people enraged over the eviction of the anti-I-69 treesit stormed the office of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources in Bloomington. The crowd charged through the doors of the office, pushing papers off desks, smashing a potted plant, and generally yelling, chanting, whistling and causing a disruption.

June 24 - Hicksville, NY: An office of HNTB at 40 Commerce Pl. was found to have its windows and front door covered in paint, with messages spray-painted all over the front and sides: “Deal with I-69, deal with us.” The locks on the front and back doors were glued shut. The windows could not be cleaned, as the paint was etched into the glass.

June 24 - Evansville, IN: The River City Animal Defense League visited an office of Bernardin-Lockmueller and Associates (BLA), the company responsible for planning the entire route of I-69. Denied entrance to the building, the protesters banged on windows and shouted through an intercom, and a window on the building was smashed.

The group released this communique: “We know you’ve been targeted in the past, but since construction has recently begun- expect more chaos and aggression directed at your company and the workers that make what you do possible. Next time maybe we’ll pay your homes a visit, because we know where you live and we know what you do.... Let this be a call for others to take action against this highway which not only effects Indiana, but the entire continents of North, Central, and South America. Those of us who have the privilege of being North American must use our privilege to fight for a world where the Global South is no longer exploited by capitalism.”



June 25 - Haubstadt, IN: Protesters shut down a work yard of Gohmann Asphalt and Construction — the company building the first 1.77 miles of Interstate 69 north of Evansville — for 3.5 hours. One person stopped a truck exiting the site, giving others time to let the air out of the vehicles tires then lock onto it both below and above. They were soon joined by a crowd chanting and holding signs. One person was arrested for allegedly letting the air out of the tires, but the other protesters negotiated with police to be released without being arrested or even identified.

June 30 - “This morning, the owners of Bernardin, Lochmueller, & Associates in Maryville, Illinois were popping aspirins to deal with their headaches. Maybe the underlings enjoyed the day off. The company car had all four tires slashed, headlights, windows, and mirrors busted out, and paint job ruined. The office building had its locks glued, windows smashed, and exterior painted with “187 ON I-69” and “THE FRONTLINE IS EVERYWHERE.” “Wherever capitalists maneuver to increase their wealth and power, there we find a target for our anger... This time around the surveyors got it. Two of the three BLA locations have been sabotaged. “

July 14 - Second lockdown blockade of Gohmann Asphalt; more than a dozen arrests.

July 16 - Despite an overwhelming police presence, local anarchists and rural organizers protest the I-69 groundbreaking ceremony in downtown Evansville.

July 31 - Resistance to the construction of Interstate 69 continued nationally on Monday as nearly 100 people took over K Street in Washington, D.C. to demonstrate their opposition to NAFTA & I-69. SDSers, Potomac EF!ers, and others danced in the streets, handed out hundreds of fliers and stickers about I-69, and held corporations publicly accountable for their complicity in I-69 and the Plan Puebla Panama. The Cato Institute, HNTB, and the *Washington Post* were particular targets. This action “...also served as a reminder to those responsible for Interstate 69: we know where you are, we will continue to visit you wherever you hide, and all that protects you are thin glass doors and a line of riot police. Capitalism may be globalized, but so is resistance.”

August 1 – A US Bank in Santa Cruz, CA has its windows broken.

August 19 – Protests against Michael J. Baker and Wilbur Smith offices in Richmond, VA.

August 20 – Protest against a Merrill Lynch office in North Carolina leads to its trashing.

September 10 – Keith Lochmueller, CEO of BLA, finds his front lawn covered with hundreds of anti-I-69 leaflets.

September 19 – BLA office in Evansville is attacked, leaving broken doors and windows.

October 24 - the Chicago meeting of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association was picketed by anti-I-69 protestors.

Throughout October - three Chase ATMs are smashed because of Chase’s involvement with Gohmann Asphalt. The communique says that Gohmann “is responsible for the construction of the first 1.7 miles of the I-69 NAFTA superhighway. We find this disgusting. GAC is responsible for the relocation of families, the murder of wild animals, the destruction of delicate ecosystems, the contribution of sweat shop labor, the furtherance of globalization.”

2009

January 28 – Demonstration against Pricewaterhouse Cooper office in Philly, demanding that the company withdraws its investments in I-69.

February 12 – Michael J. Baker office in Philly is protested.

and much more...



We refuse to forget the people taken from us by the State, as well as the people who betrayed them. Above: Marie Mason, currently serving a 22-year sentence, and Frank Ambrose, who turned her in.

# bloomington people’s history