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'Bypass' Alert!

Anarchist Communist Federation

1997

An 11-mile dual carriageway of the A36 trunk road around Salisbury, costing at least £150m to build by private finance, is proposed. This will cut off and wreck the landscape setting of this medieval city, cross three out of five rivers in Britain's best chalk stream system, carve through chalk hills in cuttings as deep as 60ft and bury one corner of one of the country's rarest grass meadows. Yet, for all this waste and destruction, this 'bypass' would do nothing to reduce traffic and pollution in the city itself.

"It would be wrong to give the public the impression that the bypass will take traffic out of the city centre"

— Dept. of Transport evidence to public inquiry, 2 Dec. 1993 — although that is exactly what they are doing.

The government said that it was a bypass to relieve traffic congestion in Salisbury, yet even at the time of the inquiry the Department of Transport's own figures showed that most traffic is 'local' and congestion would therefore get steadily worse, even with the bypass. New roads they said, drew in new traffic, so leading to congestion and reducing time-savings that road builders use to justify

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Retrieved on May 13, 2013 from web.archive.org
Published in *Organise!* Issue 45 — Spring 1997.

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their schemes. They admitted that the bypass was being build to serve through traffic and that this accounted for only 10% of traffic in Salisbury.

"There will be a traffic increase in Salisbury, bypass or no bypass"

— DoT, 10 Nov. 1993.

The DoT knows that this road is bigger and uglier than Newbury, that the landscape and city under threat is far more valuable and that it will have 'presentational difficulties' building a privatised road through the watermeadows and chalk hills here. It is too late for second thoughts when the bulldozers come. To be silent now is to invite the earthmovers to rip into the chalk hills and dump them across the river valleys. It is time to act!