

New Zealand Deputy PM visits Argentina's fascist President Milei

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6 January 2026

In a provocative post on X on January 1, New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour boasted about an "inspiring" end-of-year meeting he had with Argentina's fascist President Javier Milei and Foreign Minister Pablo Quirno.

The post includes a photo of Seymour at a table with Milei, presumably at the presidential building in the capital Buenos Aires. Seymour offers no explanation about the status of the meeting—or how his visit was funded. Seymour's post appears only on his personal X account. He is not, however, a "private" individual but leader of the "libertarian" ACT Party in NZ's National Party-led coalition government, in which he holds numerous ministerial posts.

Milei in turn reposted a tweet by Augustin Echebarne, Director General of the far-right think tank Fundación Libertad y Progreso, declaring: "President @jMilei received the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand yesterday and reinforced their alignment on liberal reforms. David Seymour is enthusiastic about the Argentine government's reforms!!" (Translated).

Seymour waxes lyrical about the supposed achievements of the Milei government, which he falsely claims has "halved its number of departments, cut spending by 30 percent, is posting the first fiscal surpluses in decades, seeing poverty down and economic growth up." He was personally "struck by Milei's deep economic knowledge and his humility considering his enormous achievements. Legend."

Seymour's claims about the "successes" of Milei's brutal austerity program are a litany of lies. In October, Milei's most powerful international ally, US President Trump threw him a lifeline in the form of an extension of a \$US40 billion bailout package and \$20 billion currency swap to prop up Argentina's ailing peso. Trump painted a dire picture of the country's stagnating economy, telling reporters: "Argentina is fighting for its life ... They are

dying."

Trump's intervention was not simply a personal favour between like-minded leaders, but a calculated move by US finance capital and imperialism to defend class rule amid an escalating crisis. The bailout binds Argentina's far-right regime to Washington, secures access for US capital and sharpens the assault on working people across the Americas. Unsurprisingly, Milei promptly expressed support for the criminal January 3 US invasion of Venezuela.

Milei's "chainsaw" program of privatisation, layoffs and deregulation has imposed catastrophic social consequences on working people, while strengthening the hand of domestic and international capital. Real incomes and living standards have collapsed, poverty has surged to historically high levels and millions face hunger, homelessness and the loss of basic services.

Devaluations and budget cuts have sharply eroded wages—public-sector pay fell, minimum and pension incomes lost purchasing power, and unemployment and job losses skyrocketed. Cuts and privatisation have slashed budgets for health, education and social programs.

Austerity measures, aimed at funnelling more money to the capitalist elite, pushed the poverty rate from 42 to 53 percent by mid-2024. Official figures show a decline to 32 percent by mid-2025, primarily due to reduced inflation—this represents a still-extreme level of deprivation, including children going hungry, pensioners denied medicines and millions pushed into insecurity.

The social reversal has been accompanied by a frontal attack on democratic rights and a growth of repressive powers. Decrees have served to outlaw strikes and authorise draconian measures against demonstrations, criminalising basic forms of working-class resistance. Roadblocks and strike pickets have been banned, alongside an executive decree with 366 measures

eliminating regulations and labour rights.

Seymour's glorification of Milei's shock therapy and police state regime must be taken as a sharp warning by the New Zealand and international working class. The NZ deputy prime minister's embrace of the fascist Argentinian president is further evidence of the sharp rightward lurch of political establishments in every country, amid escalating popular resistance to capitalist breakdown and the drive to war.

In a "State of the Nation" speech last January, Seymour called for Milei-style policies: privatisation of public services including health and education, removal of regulatory constraints on corporate profit-making and a doubling of the military budget. He also warned of the "danger" of young people and students being attracted to Marxism and "the hard left."

Since assuming office in 2023, the NZ coalition government has elevated ACT's agenda, passing policies such as the Regulatory Standards Bill aimed at shredding "red tape." In a *New Zealand Herald* column, Seymour said too much money was spent on making buildings compliant with earthquake regulations, when "fewer than 500 people have died from earthquakes." Seymour has also opened the door to privatisation in education with the establishment of US-style publicly funded, privately operated Charter Schools.

ACT's Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety, Brooke van Velden, has pushed through legislation cancelling "pay equity" agreements for thousands of women in the public service, watering down workplace health and safety laws, imposing below inflation pay rises on minimum wage workers, allowing employers to deduct pay for partial strike action and making dismissal processes easier.

This sweeping agenda has no popular support. ACT has been given free rein in the onslaught on workers' living standards despite gaining just 8.6 percent of the votes in 2023. With National getting 38.06 percent of votes, the coalition agreement also included the anti-immigrant NZ First on just 6.08 percent of the vote.

Empowering the two extremist minor parties represented a sharp shift to the right by the entire ruling establishment. Seymour and NZ First leader Winston Peters were rewarded by sharing the deputy prime minister's role, with the pro-US Peters also installed as Foreign Minister.

ACT gives the most open expression to the class-war agenda of the ruling class, which National and Labour basically agree with.

ACT is an offshoot of the Labour Party: It was founded in 1993 by Roger Douglas, formerly the finance minister in the 1980s Labour government led by David Lange. The 1984–1990 Lange-Douglas government carried out historic attacks on the working class in response to the globalisation of production—the same basic agenda implemented by Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the United States.

Douglas founded ACT to complete what he called the "unfinished business" of the 1980s: the complete evisceration of what remained of the welfare state and public services. Douglas was knighted for his services to capitalism, but for workers, especially those who lived through the 1980s, he remains one of the most reviled figures in New Zealand politics. The changes implemented in the 1980s have, however, never been reversed by any subsequent government.

ACT has maintained a foothold in parliament for the past decade thanks to an electoral alliance with the National Party and financial backing from some of the country's richest individuals.

The opposition Labour Party has no fundamental differences with the government's austerity agenda. It openly supports the doubling of military spending and preparations to join a US-led war against China. With a general election due this year, the ruling elite and big business is seeking to intensify Milei-style attacks on the working class—which will be implemented by whichever bourgeois parties take office.

Global capitalism, including in New Zealand as well as Argentina, has reached a dead end and offers nothing but disaster. The only force capable of resisting austerity, repression and imperialism is an independent working class movement armed with an international socialist perspective, the program of the Socialist Equality Group (NZ) and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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