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STATEMENT BY THE RT HON DR DAVID OWEN MP, LEADER OF THE
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, COMMENTING ON CLIVE PONTING'S ACQUITTAL
11 FEBRUARY 1985

"The Jury's verdict is a triumph for commonsense. It demonstrates that the interests of the state are not synonymous with the interests of a Government and that neither Mr Heseltine nor Mrs Thatcher are the sole arbiters of what is represented by the national interest, and that civil servants are not expected by the citizen to be party to misleading Parliament. This is further proof that Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act urgently needs to be repealed."

"The No 10 briefing machine is now busy setting up Mr Stanley, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence, to be the Government's fall guy over the Ponting acquittal. The truth is that it is the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister alone who is responsible. Whereas Mr Heseltine was responsible for the conduct of Mr Stanley and Sir Michael Havers for the Director of Public Prosecutions, it is the Prime Minister who from 4 May 1982 bears the responsibility for persistently and systematically misleading both the House of Commons and the country. Tomorrow the House of Commons wants to hear from the organ grinder - not the monkey nor Tarzan. The nation deserves nothing less than an apology."