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## DISILLUSIONED 'MUNCHKIN' STRIKES BACK AT 'WIZARD'

By **STUART TAYLOR JR.**

Barbara Honegger, the women's movement's newest symbol, stood on a footstool peering over a brace of microphones today and spoke of many things - of Munchkins and Easter bunny costumes, of Ronald Reagan and women's rights, of Maureen Reagan and the selling of souls.

"They called me a Munchkin," she said of the President's men, mingling wounded dignity with retaliatory mockery. Then, holding aloft a photograph of herself with Mr. Reagan for the zooming television lenses and popping flash attachments, she said: "This is me with the Wizard of Oz. This is the President. This is the Munchkin with the Wizard."

Miss Honegger, a 35-year-old former political appointee, was flanked by feminist leaders who greeted her defection from the Administration this week as a precious gift - "nothing less than Reagan's smoking gun on women's issues," as Judy Goldsmith, president of the National Organization for Women, put it at today's news conference at NOW's office here.

The previously obscure bureaucrat has become an instant celebrity since Sunday, when she publicly denounced as "a sham" Mr. Reagan's project to eliminate sex discrimination from Federal and state laws. The next day, between television appearances, she resigned from her job at the Justice Department, where she had worked on the project for a year as a special assistant, after a stint at the White House. **L. Frank Baum Remembered**

Miss Honegger's assertions of her disillusionment with the President, along with the Administration's efforts to belittle her, have produced the latest in a series of scraps between the Administration and feminist groups, a strange public relations war laced with allusions to L. Frank Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz."

In the story, Munchkins are strange elf-like people. The Wizard, reputed to have magical powers, is exposed as a fraud and denounced by the Scarecrow as "a humbug." Miss Honegger indicated today that this was what she meant in her reference to Mr. Reagan.

Thomas P. DeCair, the Justice Department's spokesman, started the war of words by calling Miss Honegger a "low-level Munchkin." Then Larry Speakes, the chief White House spokesman, said sarcastically Wednesday that she had "played an important role" by dressing up as the Easter bunny in the White House egg roll.

Miss Honegger shot back at today's news conference: "Mrs. Meese, not I, was the bunny at the White House Easter egg roll in 1981." She said she herself had attended "in street clothing of an appropriate nature." Ursula Meese is the wife of Edwin Meese 3d, the President's counselor.

"They're trying to discredit the source," Miss Honegger said of the President's spokesmen. "They know they can't discredit the content because I've fully documented everything I said."

Mary Berry, a member of the United States Civil Rights Commission whom Mr. Reagan is trying to replace, added that "they're throwing sand in the public's eyes and trying to pretend that illusion is reality" to hide a bad record on civil rights issues. **'I'm Sincere,' Reagan Says**

Mr. Reagan was quoted today as disputing some of Miss Honegger's criticisms of the project to eliminate sex discrimination from state and Federal laws. "I'm sincere about it and want to correct it and want it done," he said.

In an interview with the newspaper USA Today, Mr. Reagan also said he thought part of his problem with women, reflected in polls, had been caused by "very deliberate and political" actions by women's groups that favor Democratic candidates.

He also reiterated his opposition to the proposed Federal equal rights amendment, suggesting that it might weaken "labor regulations and so forth that are definitely there for the benefit of women." The Soul of Miss Reagan

Miss Honegger seemed to be loving the limelight in her rambling discourse at today's news conference, declaring that Maureen Reagan, the President's daughter and the Republican Party's newly hired consultant on women's issues, "has already sold her soul" by criticizing Miss Honegger's actions.

As stage-managed media events go, the news conference arranged by NOW was less than smooth. But it was deliciously evocative of political public relations in the television age, especially in August, when news is scarce and reporters are hungry.

When she began to speak to the jostling crowd of several dozen reporters, technicians and onlookers, Miss Honegger's face was obscured by more than a dozen microphones. "I'm only 5 foot 1," she explained, her voice sounding more like that of a shy but game teen-ager than of a militant feminist.

"Get her a box!" came the cry from the television technicians. "I don't want to be put on a pedestal," Miss Honegger protested. Someone brought in a footstool. "I'm not going to stand on that thing, no way," she insisted. "It's the wrong symbol." Of the Bunny and the Bear

A woman near the stage said soothingly, "No one will ever know." Finally Miss Honegger stood on the stool.

As she was finishing, it became apparent that she did not plan to read aloud a prepared statement, distributed earlier, on the subject of bunny costumes. A television reporter demanded that the statement be read for the cameras. Miss Honegger obliged.

She said the only two occasions on which she wore bunny costumes "were for Jim Brady," the White House press secretary, known as "the Bear." Mr. Brady has been partly disabled since he, Mr. Reagan and two others were shot by John W. Hinckley Jr. here on March 30, 1981.

The cameras rolled.