

“Yeah, maybe I've got a problem with my phone,” I might reply. “Since you work for the phone company, maybe I should report it to you.”

“Sure, you can do that,” he might counter, “as I'm sure you've had a problem with your phone and I know what it is.”

“So it's fixed and will never happen again?”

“Only as long as you don't unplug your phone from the wall jack.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because I was trying to call you about our gig, but your phone was always busy and I work for the phone company, remember?”

“And?”

“And, I ran a test with our equipment and I could tell that your phone was *not* off-hook, it was unplugged from the wall jack.”

A moment of silence would ensue. “Sometimes I don't want to talk with anyone,” I would eventually explain.

“Just don't want to be bothered?”

Another moment of silence would ensue. “Sorry I missed the gig,” I would apologize.

“It wasn't anything special.”

“I don't think that's completely legal, you testing my phone like that.”

“I have to test the equipment occasionally. That was as good a time as any.”

“Do you suppose I can have a transcript of every conversation I've had on my phone? For research for my new book.”

“No.”

I couldn't even escape the clutches of the phone company from my friends who worked for it. “We know everything about you.” So, now you know how f\*\*\*ed my life is. This is certainly valuable knowledge. Clutching this knowledge, and a dollar bill, will get you a cup of coffee, or an item off the dollar menu from several fast food joints, excluding sales tax, of course. Try escaping the clutches of the tax man, or the phone company. Naturally, the phone company barely tries to escape the tax man's clutches. In fact, the phone company works in cooperation *with* the tax man, collecting tax after tax after tax. Sometimes, the phone

company even makes up taxes and collects those, too, though I'm not certain they pass that booty to the tax man. Thus, the phone company is a better tax collector than the tax man. Hooray for monopolies!