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Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title           **Coin Broker Arrested on Phone Gyp.**

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Abstract       Morris Sohnen, a coin dealer, arrested for blue box fraud in NY.

Keywords      Morris Sohnen; blue box

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Coin Broker Arrested on Phone Gyp.  
Raymond A. Wittck

Morris Sohnen, an International Coin Broker, was on the phone earlier than usual yesterday, making calls to business contacts in Israel and Switzerland, a New York Telephone Investigator said.

Sohnen had every reason to believe he would not be billed for the overseas calls the Investigator added.

Armed with a search warrant Detectives from the District Attorney's Squad and another Phone Company Investigator entered Sohnen's home at 25 Uxbridge Street, Willow Brook yesterday about 2 hours after he allegedly placed the calls. Shortly after 6 A.M. he was arrested on misdemeanor charges - theft of phone company services and possession of burglar tools.

The latter charge stemmed from the seizure of what the Phone Company called a "Blue Box," an electronic sound device which in appearance resembles a pocket calculator and which it was said Sohnen used to make illegal phone calls to South America as well as Europe and the Middle East.

In the past 4 weeks according to Fred Schwinn, a Phone Company Investigator, Sohnen had cheated the Company out of approximately \$5000 in tolls and illegal calls which he allegedly made almost daily.

Police said Sohnen described himself as a flatware dealer, but in reality was an International Broker or middle man in gold and silver coins.

Schwinn said Sohnen's calls ranged from 5 to 25 minutes. On occasion the Investigator said, he was known to have used his electronic device to save on comparatively inexpensive calls to New Jersey and the Metropolitan Area.

Schwinn said a Blue Box may be obtained by the public only through illegal means. The cost would be approximately \$1000 each.

Schwinn described the box as a oscillator which reproduced the Phone Company's computerized dial tones.

Sohnen operated the device simply by plugging into the telephone receiver in his home or wherever he called from and held the box against the transmitter.

Invariably the Investigator said, Sohnen dialed either 800 an area code number, or 555, which is information to initiate his phone call. Once he got the tone network, Schwinn said Sohnen pressed a button on the Blue Box which locked him in on a 2600 cycle wave length, cutting out the telephone operator and leaving him alone on the circuit in the called area. He then punched out the phone number he sought on the blue box, which duplicated the multi dialed tones.

Authorities said Sohnen also utilized a list of codes which ordinarily is accessible only to Phone Company personnel.

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Schwinn estimated that the alleged cheat such as Sohnen's costs the Phone Company million of dollars in tolls annually - illegal calls by using the Blue Box. The box derived its name from the color of the first such illegal device which the Phone Company came upon Schwinn said.

The Investigator said the Phone Company became suspicious of Sohnen about a month ago when it detected a pattern to Sohnen's calls from his home in studying a computer read out. The read out was based on information provided by a highly sensitive radio telephone device which the Company has been employing for the past year and one-half in an effort to run down illegal calls. The device helps pinpoint the origination of the calls.

On the basis of its information the Phone Company contacted the District Attorney's Office, and Assistant District Attorney Thomas F. Llyd prepared a search warrant that was signed by Criminal Court Judge Royal S. Raden.

Sohnen's home was one of 4 locations raided yesterday by Phone Company Investigators in which they confiscated Blue Boxes. One of the other raids, Police said, was Sohnen's father's home in Brooklyn, however, no arrest was made.

At his arraignment later in the day in Criminal Court, Sohnen was released without bail by Raden, pending a hearing on November 20th. An innocent plea was entered on his behalf.

Police said Sohnen is presently on probation in connection with a conviction on a Federal Gold Smuggling Charge.

The search of Sohnen's home was carried out by Detectives Alfred Benaducci and Robert Nowicki, operating under Lt. Charles F. Ingulli, Commanding Officer of the District Attorney's Squad. They were accompanied by T. Duffy, Phone Company Investigator.

If convicted of the charges, Sohnen would be sentenced to one year in jail, fined \$1000, or both for each alleged illegal call of which he may be found guilty