

Listen up

# Meaning of token economics given

**Editor:**  
I applaud the editor and reporters of the Battalion for their interest in civil liberties issues. Unfortunately the recent stories on the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and token economics contained several misleading statements about token economics and incorrect statements about my own research in token economics.

Token economics are reasonably complex institutions and there are quite often substantial differences between programs which go under the name of token economics or behavior modification programs. The legal issues surrounding token economics and other behavior modification programs are quite complex and are only now beginning to be litigated in the courts and discussed in the law journals. I cannot do justice to either explaining token economics or the legal issues surrounding them in any reasonable amount of space and suggest that

those interested in understanding the basic rationale and structure of token economics begin by reading *The Token Economy* by T. Ayllon and N. Azrin (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968) and those interested in the legal issues begin by reading Wexler, David B. "Token and Taboo Behavior Modification, Token Economics and the Law" *California Law Review*, 61 (1973): 81-109.

With respect to the token economy at Central Islip State Mental Hospital where I have done some research, the token economy provided supplementary goods and services for the patients and did not charge tokens for goods and services that would have been provided free without the program. The token program did not deprive patients of their usual rights such as room and board but added goods and services on the ward that would not have otherwise been available. Our experiments were not designed to

study the effects of inflation on economic behavior but rather involved increases in the prices of some goods with simultaneous decreases in the prices of other goods. The experiments were designed with the full knowledge that changes in economic conditions could adversely affect patients' behavior and we restricted our changes in economic conditions to those the psychologists running the program were confident would not have adverse effects. As an additional safeguard the cooperating psychologists were on the ward every day and were quite prepared to modify or abandon the study if what we were doing was damaging to the patients. The results of our studies have provided us with a better understanding of economic behavior and a better understanding of token economics. The latter has proved useful in suggesting ways to improve token economics and to make them better vehicles for pa-

tient therapy.

As a member of the ACLU I am actively concerned with seeing that individual rights as defined in the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution are guaranteed for all citizens. Token economics and behavior modification programs can, and at times have, abused the legal rights of individuals in these programs (see Wexler). It is not possible to rely on good will of people working in these programs (including my colleagues and myself) to insure that individuals' rights are not abused. Part of the process of determining

what individual legal rights are is by arguing cases in court. While I am not aware of the particular arguments in the Virginia ACLU case, and may well disagree on specific points with that case, I strongly support the principle that the operation of token economics must be in conformity with the law. If this means that a particular token economy program must be abandoned or radically altered, or that particular studies not be conducted, then I support the law.

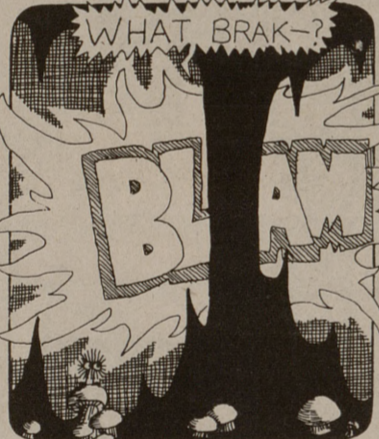
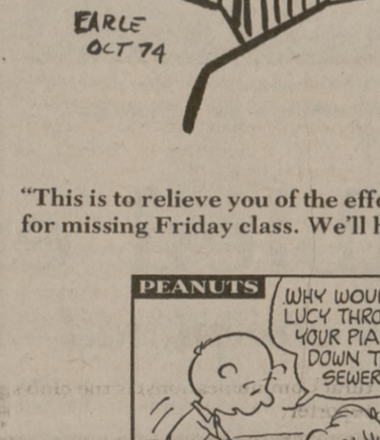
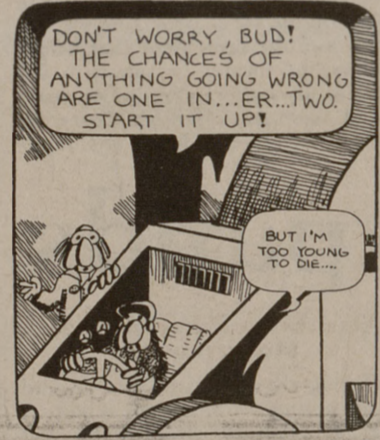
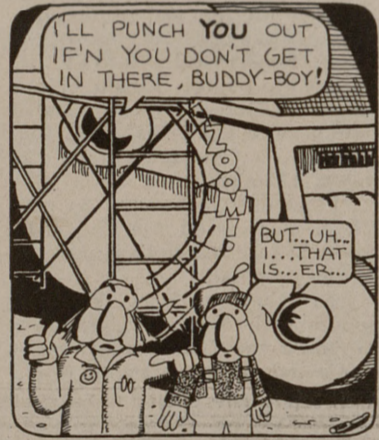
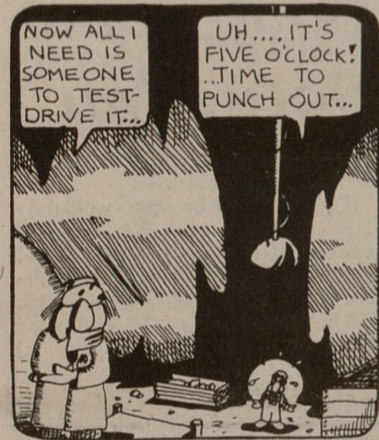
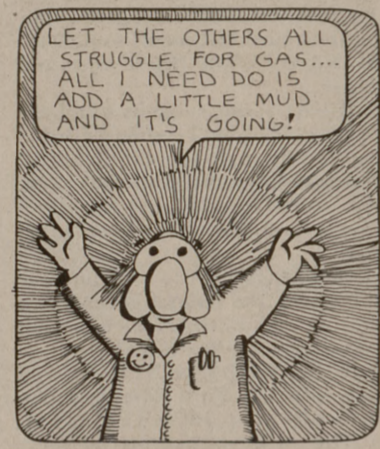
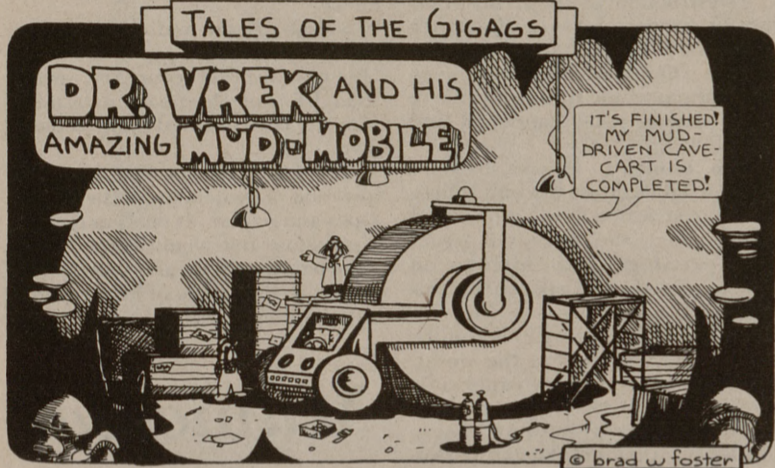
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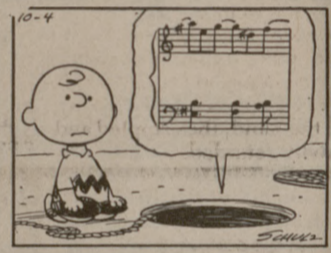
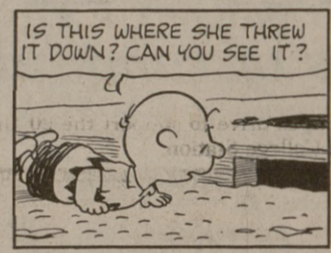
Jim Earle



"This is to relieve you of the effort required to think up an excuse for missing Friday class. We'll hold class on th' train to Kansas!"



PEANUTS



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*The Battalion*, a student newspaper at Texas A&M, is published in College Station, Texas, daily except Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and holiday periods, September through May, and once a week during summer school.

Mail subscriptions are \$5.00 per semester; \$9.50 per school year; \$10.50 per full year. All subscriptions subject to 5% sales tax. Advertising rate furnished

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