

THURSDAY: REPETITION

A little Prince to make the painful repetition a little easier to take.

By repetition I mean what's happening in Puerto Rico compared to what has already happened in Michigan.

Some of Michigan's most financially distressed cities were forced to accept emergency managers, supplanting the cities' democratically elected officials. Under state law, EMs were the sole point of power and authority for administration until the cities were deemed financially viable. We all know how that turned out; in Flint's case, ten people died from Legionnaire's disease and roughly 8000 kids will pay for the incompetence of the emergency management scheme for the rest of their lives due to the permanent effects of lead poisoning. The incompetence is further magnified by governmental bodies' failure to do the right thing to completion, while continuing to milk the city and state of more money to no effect.

Witness the state attorney general Bill Schuette now asking for \$3.4 million to investigate what can already be easily seen in records released to date. The assessments made so far have been equally wrong – like Schuette's office suing two consulting firms when documentation clearly shows outright stupidity in contract management or malfeasance on the part of government was the real problem. And none of Flint's water problems would have happened had not the city been forced off Detroit's water by the state treasurer's office, which rejected a last-minute offer far cheaper than construction of the new Karegnondi water line. Seeing this doesn't need millions of dollars, only ethics.

Puerto Rico – with a population smaller than Los Angeles in an area a little smaller than Connecticut – is now undergoing a similar loss of democracy for similar reasons of financial distress. The territory is \$73 billion in

debt caused in no small part by suffocating federal policies. The U.S. Senate just voted to supplant Puerto Rico's elected officials' authority with a team of managers. They had too little democracy as it was before this schema, not having the same kind of representation that the fifty states have; many of the financial limitations Puerto Rico faces have been directly related to the territory's inability to regulate commerce.

The economic hitmen have won. Now the vultures descend.

The galling part is this approach is called *PROMESA* (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act) – a promise. Brace yourselves, Puerto Ricans, at least they've warned you. *Que Dios tenga misericordia porque los buitres no lo hará.*

Odd lots

I've got a bunch of stray cats and dogs here that didn't fit under any theme so far this week. In other words, there wasn't much repetition. Make of them what you will.

- Russian harassment of diplomats spurs Kerry to talk with Putin (Reuters) – This was two days ago; yesterday there was a report that a diplomat was roughed up enough to require airlifting for medical treatment. Are we seeing an escalation in tension?
- Lots of loaded oil tankers just sitting around (BBC) – Looks like price of oil was still too low for oil delivery. Wonder how many tankers moved immediately

after the Brexit referendum?

- China launched a space junk collector, but is that all it will do? (SCMP) – Article suggests the equipment launched could be used as an anti-satellite weapon. Time to brush up on the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.
- Milling machine for DIY AR-15 is a hot item (Bloomberg) – Backorders piling up for machines from same young guy who posted plans for 3D printed guns on the internet. Just an aside: perhaps this is why gunmakers are flooding the market – their competition can't be tracked easily once they are printing them at home, so they flood them out. Which of course will end so well. Meanwhile, Congress remains in thrall to NRA money and refuses to regulate guns in anyway.
- Leash let off commercial drones with new regulations (Naked Security) – Great. Can hardly wait for our skies to be filled with drones surveying everything, thanks to a lack of privacy restrictions and a rather broad requirement that the drones don't fly directly

over people not controlling them. Bad enough private drones are out of control (like the one some jackass flew to window-peep at my kid's university-adjacent apartment complex).

- Nonprofit Mozilla re-branding itself as an open source 'change maker' and 'internet freedom fighter' (Creative Review) – Company is eating its own dogfood by performing this rebrand out in the open.

Thank goodness tomorrow is Friday and I can indulge in a little jazz. See you then.