

## Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man, Thief.

Written by The Dutchbhooy

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Money is the root of all evil, and with regard to modern day professional football, it is a very appropriate maxim. The recent world cup failed to show any relationship between players' and manager's salaries and their performance on the field. John Terry, Wayne Rooney and Frank Lampard jointly earn more weekly than the combined squad salaries of New Zealand and several African and Asian countries combined.

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Fabio Capello earns more than five times than Joachim Lowe, whose German team humiliated England so emphatically in the tournament. Capello earns more in a few days than the New Zealand coach earns in a year, (relatively speaking, the all whites have got a real bargain!)

The mistake that England and the English media make is that they presume that big spending and huge salaries equate with excellence on the field. Events in South Africa have cruelly disabused them of this notion.

Real Madrid is another example of profligate spending not resulting in success on the field. The obscene amounts of money they have squandered in recent years is absolutely astounding. Aided and abetted by a friendly 'business' atmosphere and indulgent culture, Real Madrid the establishment team seem to operate in a financial planet far removed from mere mortals.

But where does Scotland, and more specifically Celtic stand in relation to this financial madness? The fact is, quite well really if the truth be told. Celtic have been able to build a brand new stadium, fill it for the most part, while being trapped in a midget league with virtually no television money. It might come as a surprise to certain Celtic supporters, but Celtic is a well-run club. We are the biggest spenders in Scottish football, and are prepared to pay top dollar for those few genuine stars who wish to tread the rustic backwaters of the SPL. Celtic has not fallen into the deadly trap of paying way over the odds for mediocre talent, and descending into the fatal cycle of players' wages rapidly overtaking income.

In short, Celtic have not made the same gross errors that Rangers have in the last twenty years. I use the last twenty years, not the last ten or even the last five, as I believe football goes in cycles. Rangers paid massive transfer sums and dished out huge wages, which Celtic largely avoided. All of this will be of no consolation to those of us who say, who has won the SPL for the last two years? Who will represent Scotland in the CL group stages? I recognize that this is unacceptable, but the point is that in the last two seasons, Celtic has outspent Rangers both in terms of signings and wages. The fault lies with the managers who made bad signings and failed to motivate the players. The Board did appoint Strachan and Mowbray, but given the fact that no manager of any real standing wanted to come to Celtic, what realistic options did they have? In truth, the Neil Lennon appointment is a similar gamble, as we all know.

I have real concerns about Lennon as a rookie manager propelled into a job that requires patience, experience and above all nous. One would love to think that Neil has these attributes, but patently he does not. And yet bizarrely, I now believe that he will succeed for reasons outwith his control.

The same catastrophic forces that have descended upon Portsmouth, Hull, et al, have visited Rangers with a vengeance. Rangers face the real prospect of starting the season with a threadbare squad of professional players. Anything defined as being as an 'asset', can and will be sold to the first serious buyer. They are no longer in control of their destiny, and if there was ever a moment for an apprentice like Lennon to take on the job it is now. A month remains before the end of the transfer window, and Rangers' supporters are dreading the prospect of even more players being moved on. Were that to happen, then Lennon would be given a huge

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psychological lift before a ball is kicked in earnest.

At a personal level, I take great satisfaction at Rangers plight. Since time immemorial, Rangers have used their financial muscle as yet another means of expressing their innate 'superiority' over Celtic and its supporters. Long before David Murray sailed in over the horizon, Rangers basked in the knowledge that they had more money and were better off than Celtic. Much of this was to do with demographics and the growth of Glasgow as an industrial powerhouse in Victorian Britain. From its inception, Celtic was the club of the immigrant, the dispossessed and the poor. Rangers was blue collar, skilled and indigenous. Celtic seen through the eyes of native bigots was unskilled, hungry and foreign. There may well have been some poverty and deprivation among the 'native' Scots, but many a Glaswegian bigot took cold comfort in the fact that there was a whole class, or sub-class below him in the form of the Irish Catholic immigrant.

We still see that mindset today in those Rangers supporters continually referring to Celtic supporters as 'beggars', a racial slur which apart from being untrue, says more about how far their club has travelled in more than one hundred years.

These socio-economic factors were also reflected in the composition of the Celtic and Rangers' Boards. At Board level Celtic's first committee men were drawn from the pub industry, and Rangers from the Scottish Establishment, snobbery and social superiority went hand in hand.

How ironic that today Rangers have been run into the ground by a man who was very much part of the Scottish Establishment, (and knighted for his 'contributions'), whereas the Celtic revival came from a man who was forced to leave for Canada to make his fortune. Moreover, everything about Rangers reeks of corruption, lies and subterfuge. What exactly is the extent of the Rangers debt? Why has Sir David Murray been forced to stand down not once but twice?, and why has no suitable buyer for Rangers been found after such a long time? And what of the role of such dubious characters as Dave King (currently assisting the South African authorities in the strange case of the missing millions) and Mr Ellis, who came, saw and went away again.

I would delight in Celtic winning the league next year, only to hear that Celtic 'bought' the championship. The irony would be superb.