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Play football not finance, Lagarde tells Cantona

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PARIS, Dec 1 (Reuters) - France's economy minister told Eric Cantona on Wednesday to stick to football not finance after the former Manchester United goalscorer called for a nationwide run on banks to punish them for their role in the financial crisis.

"Mr Cantona is no stranger to controversy. He is a great footballer, but I'm not sure we need to pay heed to all his suggestions," Christine Lagarde told a news conference.

In a filmed interview last month that became a YouTube hit, Cantona said millions of people should start a revolution by withdrawing their money from their banks.

"No weapons, no blood," he said, invoking the calling card of notorious French bank robber Albert Spaggiari, who in 1976 made off with millions of francs after tunnelling his way into a branch of Societe Generale.

"Each to their own," Lagarde said, when asked about Cantona's proposal. "There are those who play football magnificently, and I would not dare to try. I think it's best for everyone to stick to their own speciality."

Cantona's call has been taken up by Stop Banque, a France-based movement that is advocating a run on banks on Dec. 7. The group's Facebook page has 10,872 fans.

A number of other Facebook groups have since taken up Cantona's cause. "Revolution by withdrawing banks' money" calls on citizens to strike "a terrible blow" at the heart of the global economy, and currently has just over 300 followers.

The French Banking Federation has declined to comment.

"I'm not particularly concerned. I don't think for a minute that it could cause a liquidity crisis," said Christophe Nijdam, analyst at AlphaValue. "I'm more worried about a banking liquidity crisis linked, for the wrong reasons, to sovereign debt risk." (Reporting by [Daniel Flynn](#), Jean-Baptiste Vey, Lionel Laurent and Matthieu Protard, editing by Tim Pearce)

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