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BOOK REVIEW - **Who Runs Britain?** by Robert Peston

Love him or loathe him – and Robert Peston, the BBC’s Business Editor, does seem to divide people decisively one way or the other – has become a household name over recent months since the onset of the current economic crisis. The cover describes it as “the number one business book of the year” and “essential reading” to learn “who’s to blame for the economic mess we’re in”. Like many people, I suspect, I hear the news everyday and marvel at the size of the numbers quoted but struggle to understand much of the technical jargon. So, could this guide help me out? It was worth a try!

If I reveal that the opening page includes reference to Arsenal football club, David Bowie and dishwashers, you will quickly realise that this is not going to be some heavy-weight tome that only the most business-minded should attempt to read. Robert Peston has an engaging style of writing which makes each chapter – be it on capitalism, pensions or manufacturing – feel approachable and even interesting in a way you might never have imagined. By the end of chapter five you will have read about collateralized debt obligations, structured investment vehicles and the dangers of liquidity mismatch, none of which are as frightening to learn about as you might think!

The book gives an historical background to key events that changed or influenced the current national position, offers insight into the reasons behind decisions made and introduces the key individuals who played a part.

As to the answer to the book’s title “Who Runs Britain?” his conclusion gives plenty of food for thought. At present so much seems uncertain in both economic and political terms that perhaps future editions will need an added final chapter.

Sarah Payne

Available in paperback, price £8.99, from Woodlanders, 14 King Street, Southwell. Telephone 01636 815172