

The BBC's economic commentary

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I received [this comment today](#):

Richard, might I ask an unrelated question?

What do you think of the BBC's current financial coverage? Do you think it is extensive, honest, penetrating? Is it reflective of the real turmoil and double-dealing taking place in the City of London, or is it supine and obfuscatory? I as as I was stunned to find that the BBC had dedicated part of its website to asking which 'cuts' people felt the government should make; and this in spite of the fact that the banks had been handed trillions of pounds of taxpayers money? No mention was made of the fact that the private debt of the the banking sector was transferred to the public's balance sheet — nor was there any mention that this private debt crisis, because it was shirked onto the public balance sheet, helped to trigger a fiscal and thence sovereign debt crisis! Do you think we are seeing honest reporting of events? If not, how do you think we can go about solving this problem?

Thanks,

Jonah.

So let's start by saying the political right complain that the BBC is really left wing. And then let's dismiss that because the right has now moved so far to the extreme that anything that is remotely reasonable (even Conservative) is extreme to them.

Now let's view this objectively. And the answer is that the BBC's performance on economics is poor. Nick Robinson's objectivity as political editor has been widely questioned and focuses too much on, well, Nick Robinson if truth be told. No one is sure why he ignored the Murdoch hacking scandal for so long. I make the point to suggest there's an unquestioning attitude pervading the BBC.

Robert Peston has a deeply annoying presentation style which I could forgive but he's a) sensationalist b) therefore too interested in the moment and not in analysis and c) buys the City line far too much and readily, often showing weakness in ability to

question or comprehend answers in the process. I've fisked more than one of his blogs in the past for precisely this reason. He buys the standard line that tax is a 'bad thing'.

Stephanie Flanders is pure Institute for Fiscal Studies, and that means right of centre, buys neoliberalism lock stock and barrel, presumes tax is always a bad thing and generally lacks the objectivity required for the job because she comes, like all neoliberals, predisposed to an answer.

Paul Mason is a shining exception to all the above.

Are we getting what we deserve? No, we're not.

The answer? Hard to say. The Guardian, New Statesman and others try hard to provide good comment. Channel 4 is always a better news programme than the BBC. But what we really need is better radio, more often, because that's where these things get teased out best.

I often wonder if we now need the equivalent of US public radio with its eclectic broadcasting. Just a thought. And I appreciated the question.