

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko, with Michael Conliffe, Piano

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Greetings and Welcome. I understand that the Prime Minister is supporting moves to discourage trade union activity by having Public Sector union reps' pay stopped when they take time to work for trade unions. The fighting talk and ridicule that was directed at the workers in the lead up to and on the day of the recent 24-hour strike is thus being intensified. As the various leaders fly back and forth across Europe trying to give the impression that they understand the financial crisis, let alone have a clue how to control it, the workers are supposed to stand by and watch quietly. Struggling nations in Europe are now seeing the world's banks impose and install technocrats to run their countries' economies, in the interests of these mysterious markets that seem to be the most important consideration of the politicians. Few are suggesting that one way of reducing deficits should be a withdrawal of troops from conflict zones overseas. That would be economically naïve, since the ongoing replenishment of the arms that our armed forces and the military dictatorships that are our best customers is a sure source of ready cash for the government's coffers. Never mind the death and destruction elsewhere, and the resentment that is built up against the West. People that speak out like this are deemed irresponsible, naïve, unpatriotic or even irritating, like those people occupying the square outside St. Paul's Cathedral. They were inspired by the folk on Wall Street and other parts of America, who in turn followed the example of the brave people in the Arab Spring. As St. Paul's occupiers fade out of the news, it is cheering to know that other camps continue to spring up around the country, one of the most recent being in Liverpool, where two seventeen-year-old children of friends of mine are among the campers. I know that if Paul Robeson were around today, he would go round these camps drawing attention to them, inspiration from them, and encouraging them and others to continue to protest against the injustices in our world, and to remind us that, as our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere have shown, we must all stand together and fight for our rights, whatever our political leaders say. I hope you enjoy show.