

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

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

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Greetings and Welcome. We hear that more redundancies are due in the armed forces soon. Of course, soldiers and police men and women are not allowed to go on strike, so they are unable to fight for their jobs, as these are seen as being too important to risk not being at the disposal of the authorities. Nurses, teachers and other public sector employees are the ones who have the power to defend their jobs, their work conditions and their pensions, but the government (and many of the public) consider them a nuisance for causing disruption to our comfortable lives. We are in dire economic circumstances, we are told, and sacrifices have to be made, as there isn't enough cash in the economy for wastefully high salaries and pensions. There is apparently enough however, to spend on seemingly endless wars abroad, and on bailing out the banks that contributed so much to the economic malaise we are find ourselves in. It's not just trade unions objecting, but ordinary folk occupying spaces around the country (St. Paul's being one of many) and around the world, hoping to effect the kind of change that the protesters the Middle East and North Africa managed to bring about. The brave civilians in Syria continue to risk and lose their lives as their regime hang on for as long as they can, maiming and killing their own people with armaments sold to them by us, at the expense of our education, health and social services. That billions should be available for killing and not caring, or for trading fairly with other nations is what is being objected to, and as we watch former bankers and technocrats being installed at the head of supposedly democratic states, it is likely that protests will intensify, and, given the propensity of all governments (ours included) to call in the armed forces to contain their people, maybe become violent. If ever there was talk of armed forces forming unions to protect themselves (and civilians) from irresponsible politicians, Paul Robeson would have been at the forefront of moves to set these up. For now, one can only hope that his story will inspire the rest of us to give support to the causes around the world that really are worth fighting for. I hope you enjoy show.