

CALL MR. ROBESON: A life, with songs.

Written and Performed by Tayo Aluko,

With Michael Conliffe, Piano

York Theatre Royal, Saturday 11th June, 2011

Greetings and Welcome. I heard a curious expression recently - that Southern Cross now find looking after the elderly “not commercially viable”, hence the trouble they find themselves in financially. Consequently their staff are worried about their jobs. More importantly, their residents are understandably nervous about their future accommodation and care. So much for the free market being trusted with running things efficiently and effectively. Then there are those private companies charged with providing all of us with heat and light – hiking their prices overnight. It is clear that I am not a fan of privatisation, even though our leaders here and around the world tell us that this is needed to help us out of the financial mess we find ourselves in. I beg to differ, so call me a socialist if you like, which is what Robeson was labelled, and thus a threat to American society. Trade Unionists opposed the privatisations of the past, continue to oppose the idea of future privatisations, and call for the diversion of our taxes from war mongering abroad to caring at home, but are labelled troublemakers. Society needs troublemakers like those who stand up for the rights of workers, the elderly and the vulnerable, like Robeson did. I'd like to think some in the audience today will be energised and inspired by Robeson's story, and stand ready to make trouble for the good of society, even at the risk of being called socialists!