

## **Building the Nation**

Henry Barlow (Uganda)

Today I did my share  
In building the nation.  
I drove a Permanent Secretary  
To an important, urgent function  
In fact, to a luncheon at the Vic.

The menu reflected its importance  
Cold bell beer with small talk,  
Then fried chicken with niceties  
Wine to fill the hollowness of the laughs  
Ice-cream to cover the stereotype jokes  
Coffee to keep the PS awake on the return journey.

I drove the Permanent Secretary back.  
He yawned many times in back of the car  
Then to keep awake, he suddenly asked,  
Did you have any lunch friend?  
I replied looking straight ahead  
And secretly smiling at his belated concern  
That I had not, but was slimming!  
Upon which he said with a seriousness  
That amused more than annoyed me,  
Mwananchi, I too had none!  
I attended to matters of state.  
Highly delicate diplomatic duties you know,  
And friend, it goes against my grain,  
Causes me stomach ulcers and wind.  
Ah, he continued, yawning again,  
The pains we suffer in building the nation!

So the PS had ulcers too!  
My ulcers I think are equally painful  
Only they are caused by hunger,  
Not sumptuous lunches!

So two nation builders  
Arrived home this evening  
With terrible stomach pains  
The result of building the nation -  
- Different ways.

#### **Sources**

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**Building the Nation - Roots**

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