

"WE WORK FOR THE COMMUNITY"

say women from Phoenix

The Mahatma Women's Group end of the year exhibition was great. The General Activity Room of the Stanmore Library in Phoenix was just buzzing. More than 150 women packed the little hall. Children rushed around. Women were talking and laughing. And then the music started and the Mahatma Women's group and the Palmcroft Women's Group started with some dancing. The clapping from the audience told the story. Everyone was having a good time. Then Peggy, from the Phoenix Working Committee, spoke about the role of women today. She said that women are used to being housewives, looking after children, husbands and homes. But now things are changing in Phoenix. Women are coming out of their homes and are getting involved in community action. Women are challenging the old way of seeing women. Everyday in our townships we hear of high rents, increase in bus fares, murders and rapes. Women are asking how they can help. How can they take up problems? And women are saying if we come together in groups we can achieve something. And this is true. There are five different women's groups there who were all involved in community work. As Peggy said, "Women are very strong and have to move ahead."

One of the members of Mahatma Women's Group said to us: "You see all the craft work

on the walls? Well, those are things we do at home on our own. We don't meet to do craft work. We used to. But now we meet to do community work. And although you see us dancing and having fun today, when we meet in our women's group we are very serious. People say women's groups are for gossiping. It is not true with us. We work for the community." The women's groups work with pre-schools, pensioners, they fight high rents and evictions. They also run a keep fit group.

A woman from Phoenix Child and Family Welfare came to speak about child abuse. Everybody listened carefully as this is a big problem in many areas. She said that thousands and thousands of children are treated badly, either sexually, emotionally or physically by adults everyday. She said that it is important that we teach our children that they have a right to live lives without being hurt in any way. We need to teach our children how to protect themselves.

After this talk one of the women said: "You haven't seen half the fun yet. Hold on to your seats because here is more!" Some women in beautiful saris and bells on their ankles did classical Indian dancing. One woman was very nervous. "I'm nervous!" she said loudly and laughed while she was dancing. It

added to the spirit of the day. Everyone in the audience laughed with her.

After the entertainment there was biryani for lunch, and everyone took the opportunity to talk and share ideas. You could just see that people were thinking "What a perfect ending to a lovely morning!" ●



Mahatma and Palmcroft Women's Group jiving it up at their end of year celebration.

Photograph by SPEAK Collective



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