

SPOTLIGHT

on bravery

Two employees of a gold mine on the West Rand risked their lives in saving four colleagues from being gassed underground in the mine, and were awarded one of the mining industry's highest honours, the Award for Outstanding Bravery. The President of the Chamber of Mines, Mr G.Y. Nisbet, made the presentation.

The two men, Mr Thuso Sebolaoa, a tip attendant, and Mr Thebeyame Modisaotsile, a team leader, received their awards at a ceremony held at West Rand Consolidated Mines Limited. The Award for Outstanding Bravery comprises an inscribed gold watch, a Certificate of Bravery, an Honour Tie, and a cheque for R750.

Describing the rescue, Mr Nisbet said that Mr Sebolaoa had entered a stope while working on 22 level of the mine, and had found members of the cleaning crew lying unconscious. He immediately sought assistance and ran to another stope, where he came upon Mr Modisaotsile. The two of them then ran back to the stope and proceeded to carry out the five unconscious men.

In Mr Nisbet's words,

'Both men were completely exhausted by the combined effects of their physical exertions and their ex-

posure to the carbon monoxide gas present in the stope.

'At no stage did either of them give any thought to their own safety, their only concern being to rescue their colleagues. Both risked their lives in exposing themselves to the gas that had accumulated in the stope as a result of a ventilation fault.

'Had it not been for their quick and courageous action, all five of the cleaning crew would almost certainly have lost their lives. Four of them, in fact, made a full recovery. Regrettably, the last man removed did not survive.'

Mr Nisbet added that there was a camaraderie among mining men, especially those who worked together underground, that existed in few other occupations. Thanks to this spirit and men like Mr Sebolaoa and Mr Modisaotsile who embodied it, many a life had been saved and many a critical problem overcome.

'It is because we have such men, men who are the backbone of our industry, that the industry has been able to achieve so much, to become, in fact, one of the foremost industries in the world', he said.



Mr T. Modisaotsile (left) and Mr T. Sebolaoa with their awards, which they received at a ceremony held on 10th April, 1985