

Stripping a crane to its barest

by GREG KEANE

PERHAPS Ron Laczko's thinking in designing the Lasco crane was that you don't need a sledgehammer to crack a walnut. What ever the reason, the crane's load chart defies its modest dimensions and strips a crane to its essentials: a boom, a winch, a counterweight and a power source.

The same minimalist thinking, combined with Meccano set simplicity, said that if the crane is simple and light enough, it can be supported by the floor slab of a high-rise building, rather than by a separate tower, and if it is modular, it can be broken down into small enough components to be transported by commonly used building lifts, moved by pallet jack and manhandled for positioning and assembly.

Laczko has developed the crane over several years, based on extensive experience in the rigging industry. The crane has been used widely in Asia, and has also been used on a number of projects in Australia, including a 100m-high chimney at Gove, where the alternative was a 140t all-terrain crane.

However, it is only recently that Laczko has acquired production facilities on the Gold Coast, and has had a unit available to demonstrate the Lasco crane's capabilities

to potential clients.

Laczko's aim is to have a unit available for hire in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, as well as a unit in NZ, so that the machine's potential can be readily demonstrated to the market.

He believes it is necessary for project managers to think "outside the circle" to take full advantage of the Lasco crane, and to do so they need to have the opportunity to see the crane in action. He sees major building projects using a large construction crane on core lifts, with the Lasco crane used for peripheral lifts, for tasks such as closing the building and handling scaffolding. On this schedule, the large crane could be dismantled up to three months earlier, while using the Lasco for lifts required to finish off the building and for dismantling work.

On many sites, large mobile cranes have access problems and restricted hours of operation - something which does not trouble the Lasco. These benefits translate from new construction work to refurbishment and demolition, where in many circumstances the Lasco could be the only crane required permanently on site. The Lasco crane could also be used to advantage where a project is falling behind schedule, through weather or other factors. It is quick to set up. and does not



Lasco L10T working on Boulderstone Hornbrook site in Sydney CBD ... a new class of crane is created.

restrict access to other equipment.

Use of a Lasco crane in such circumstances could overcome the threat of large liquidated damages for projects running late. Alternatively, a schedule built around having a Lasco crane permanently on site to supplement the main construction crane could see a shortening of the critical path, and reduce interest costs for developers.

Other areas where the Lasco could be used include marinas, where they could be used for lifting motors out of vessels, and on building or piling slipforms, where they could handle craneage and concrete kibbles or concrete pump hoses.

The Lasco has really created a new class of crane. Its novelty is both its greatest feature and its greatest drawback. However, there are significant potential benefits for those prepared to look at the crane and its capabilities, and work out how to take best advantage of them.