

Hills firm 'conveys' greetings to China

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Red and gold, the colors of the socialist revolution, are snapping in the breeze over the front entrance of the world headquarters of a bulwark of capitalism in suburban Detroit.

No, the revolution hasn't been imported to Farmington Hills. Instead, the Jervis B. Webb Co., the world's largest producer of custom engineered materials handling systems, is exporting technology to the People's Republic of China.

Webb officials last October signed a licensing agreement with the China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Co., a quasi-governmental agency, and the Chengde Mining and Machinery Works of the People's Republic, which will manufacture, install and sell four types of Webb-designed overhead conveyors.

Four Chinese executives from the Chengde works and their translator are finishing up a three-week training program at Webb's world headquarters on 17 acres just off 12 Mile Road between Farmington and Drake roads in Farmington Hills.

Webb, a worldwide company with licensing agreements in 18 nations, traditionally flies the flag of foreign visitors. Thus the People's Republic flag (in red field with a large gold star and four smaller ones in the upper left corner) will be flying for the rest of this week.

"They (the executives) are here to go over a training program they're working out for their engineers, who are

coming sometime in the future," said Anne Knisely, Webb's assistant director of public relations.

"Now they're able to use our technology to produce these conveyors for sale in China," she said.

THE AGREEMENT is Webb's first with the People's Republic since business with the United States became possible in 1979, Knisely said.

"The significance of this particular agreement is that it is the first and only technical assistance agreement for engineered conveying systems that China has made with any western firm at all," she added.

"They're making a very serious attempt to industrialize. This is very fundamental industrialization, but it's a start."

The conveyor systems, which are used to transport parts and finished products around factories and warehouses, will have many applications in Red China, said Pan Shi Long, the delegation leader and deputy director of the Chengde works, through translator Tang Zhong Yuan.

The trip to the U.S. was the first for all five visitors, who are staying at the Sheraton Oaks Hotel in Novi.

"The USA is a great country and the American people are great," Pan said during a tour of the 160,000-square-foot Webb headquarters Tuesday. "We have strong impression that the American people have a very friendly feeling toward China."

THE CHINESE plant is in Chengde,

a city about 125 miles northeast of Beijing, formerly Peking.

The agreement concludes negotiations which began in December 1981. Representatives of the Webb company visited the People's Republic four times between December 1981 and October 1983.

Webb officials wouldn't say how much money was involved in the deal.

"The Webb Co. is a private company," Knisely said. "It's family-owned and family-run, so we don't usually disclose the amount of money that's involved in these kinds of deals."

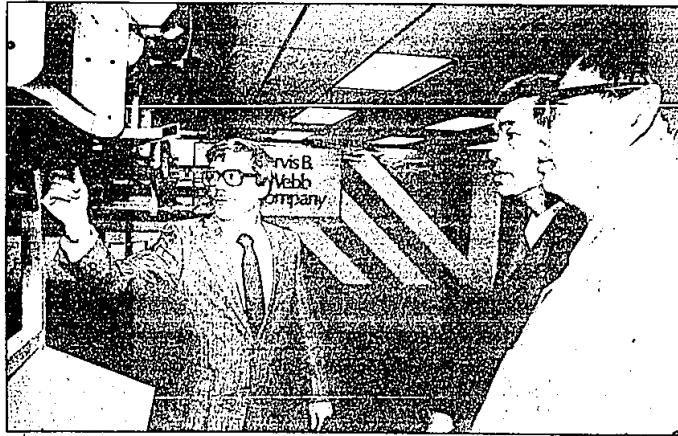
After this week, the Chinese executives will be gone, but a foreign flag probably will be flying still over the Webb entrance.

"We have foreign visitors at least half the time," said Gerry Dijkers, technical director of Webb's International Division. "We have people coming in from Brazil tomorrow."

"Once a year we have a seminar with representatives of all the countries with which we have agreements. It's like a mini-United Nations around here then."

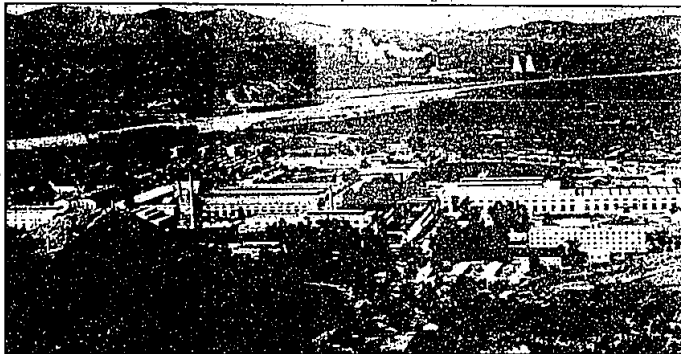
Other Webb licensees are in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

The company, founded in 1919 by the late Jervis B. Webb, has approximately 2,300 employees in the United States and Canada. Some 500 employees work in the world headquarters in Farmington Hills.



Four executives from the People's Republic of China have been visiting the Jervis B. Webb Co. in Farmington Hills to learn about the conveyor systems they'll be producing when they return to their country. In the photo above, Jervis H. Webb, vice president of plant operations, explains the systems to Guo Shi Mao (far right) and Huang Xin. At left, Gerry Dijkers, technical director of Webb International, looks over a product with Pan Shi Long. Webb has licensing agreements in 18 nations.

Photos by
Randy Borst



Chengde Mining Machinery Works, located 125 miles northeast of Beijing (formerly Peking), will design and manufacture four types of Webb-designed overhead conveying equipment.

memory lane

Memories, memories... have we got the memories. And we'd like to share them with you. Using local newspaper files, we're dishing up generous slices of life in the Farmington community from 40, 30, 20 and 10 years ago.

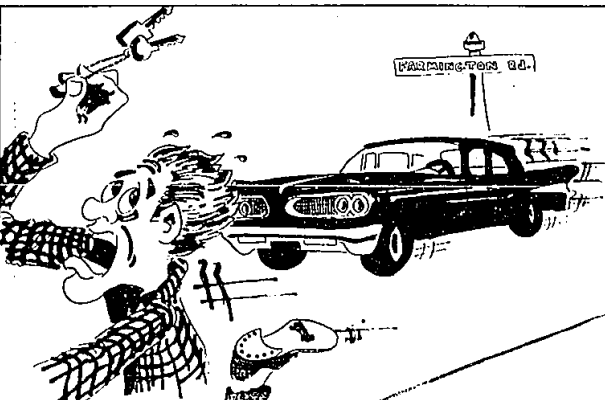
MARCH 16, 1944

THE WEEK OF March 9 was to be observed as Victory Garden Week, according to a proclamation issued by Farmington Mayor Delos Hamlin. During the week, residents were asked to plan a summer garden. In 1943, Michigan gardeners produced half a ton of food valued at \$20 million.

FARMINGTON HIGH School's basketball team lost 37-25 to Flint Technical in the state Class B regional final at Ferndale High. "Now that the basketball season is over for 1943-44, we can all settle back into our normal lives again," said a front-page story in the Farmington Enterprise. "The Farmington team this year has been the best and has gone the farthest of any F.H.S. team for a long time."

FRIDAY, MARCH 17, will surely see the "wearing of the green" in Farmington — and that's for sure with all the good Irish folk hereabouts," said an Around the Block item. "This is one town where St. Patrick's Day will always be assured the proper recognition. This year with a log of local lads in old Erin, we'll stick a jaunty shamrock in our button holes and wear it with a little extra special meaning."

SHORT ITEM: "American bombers are guaranteed to remain aloft only 40 seconds after crash-landing in the ocean." Another short item: "Miss Mary Hamlin of Independence has pneumonia, but is recovering very nicely now."



MARCH 18, 1954 —

"ANOTHER RUNAWAY took place on South Farmington Road this week to add a touch of excitement to the local scene," noted an Around the Block item. "This is about the fifth or sixth time in the past few weeks that a car has taken off down the street all by its lonesome. The latest incident resulted in a banged-up door and a fairly good-sized crowd. Two weeks ago a runaway car plowed through the front window of Conroy's Market, causing considerably more damage and a much larger audience. Police are requesting motorists who park along South Farmington Road to put their cars in gear and set the emergency brake to discourage any ideas of wanderlust on the part of the family chariot."

"MISS POLLY TIX," said an editorial, "is getting lots of attention these days at the Alaskan-Hawaiian statehood ball being held under the lights of the United States Senate."

"For awhile it seemed like an all Hawaiian affair, with Alaska getting the wall flower treatment. But the music seems to have changed now, and everyone is out on the floor cutting a caper."

"We hate to see anyone waiting at the door when the band starts playing, so we would suggest that Miss Polly Tix find herself a cab and go."

"If we're going to have a ball, let's make it a good one... a two-star affair with no wall flowers."

"RUGGED CHICKS will pay you larger profits," said an advertisement for Melvin Feed & Hardware, 30015 Eight Mile Road. "Our pedigreed chicks are bred for liveability." The store charged \$17 for 100 day-old chicks.

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NEW ALTERNATIVES

EMPHASIS GROPPED



A cut above. Skimming the waistline, boring the ankles. This spring, look for bold new shapes in tops and pants from NILANI. Here, two breezy favorites in a crisp blend of cotton and linen. Both in grey streaked with black and white, sizes 6 to 14. Flanged top, \$48. Pants, \$42. In New Reflections at Hudson's Northland, Eastland, Oakland, Westland, Fairlane, Lakeside, Twelve Oaks.

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