

One Wisconsin Now: What does the Foxconn CEO say about his employees?

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MADISON, Wis. — Taiwanese electronics manufacturer Foxconn, who Gov. Scott Walker would like to send up to \$3 billion of our tax dollars, has a troubling record when it comes to employee working conditions. According to [a story in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), the views Foxconn CEO Terry Gou has expressed about his workforce — referring to them as “animals” and seeking management advice from a zoo director — may provide some explanation.

“These comments and the attitude they reveal are outrageous,” said One Wisconsin Now Deputy Director Mike Browne. “Wisconsin workers aren’t animals and they deserve to be treated with respect. The factories they work in aren’t zoos and their working conditions ought to be safe and humane.”

As reported yesterday by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel:

“(Foxconn parent company) Hon Hai has a workforce of over one million worldwide and as human beings are also animals, to manage one million animals gives me a headache,” Foxconn CEO Terry Gou was quoted saying in 2012 at a company party held at the Taipei Zoo.

The story goes on:

Soon after making his comments five years ago, Gou had Chin Shih-chien, the director of the zoo, participate in Foxconn parent company's annual review and spoke to his executives about how to manage animals based on their temperaments, according to Want China Times, a Taiwan-based news outlet that has since ceased publication.

"I am managing over one million animals every day and it's such a headache. But our zoo chief knows that he can put tigers and lions together, but not tigers and chickens together. So I want to learn from him," Gou said.

In China, where Foxconn has large manufacturing operations, "suicide nets" have been installed at factories. According to media reports, in 2010 there were over a dozen confirmed deaths by suicide and several more attempts. Workers were subsequently required to sign documents pledging they would not make suicide attempts. Two years later, incidents involving 300 and 150 workers threatening mass suicide attempts in protest of working conditions and wages were reported.

On the table to lure Foxconn to Wisconsin is a package of state and local subsidies that could exceed \$3 billion. According to figures provided by Gov. Walker and Foxconn, who negotiated the deal in secret, Wisconsin taxpayers could literally be sending a check to Foxconn from the state's general fund of up to \$250 million every year for fifteen years in exchange for an estimated \$180 million in state and local tax revenue.

Yet the legislation to implement the deal contains no guarantees on worker rights or that this massive Wisconsin tax dollar subsidy to the multi-billion Taiwanese manufacturer will be supporting jobs for Wisconsin residents.

At a public hearing yesterday on proposed state legislation, Foxconn did not appear although six plus hours of invited speakers supporting the deal were heard before the general public was allowed to speak on the deal for which they are being asked to foot the bill.

Browne concluded, "When a CEO who refers to employees as animals and seeks management advice from a zoo director concocts a deal with someone with the record of Scott Walker on workplace rights, it's a toxic combination for Wisconsin workers. Before we send one dime of our tax dollars to subsidize Foxconn's operations there need to be ironclad worker protections written into law."