

subject. Before the interview, think carefully about the questions you want to ask, and prepare them in such a way that they don't determine the answers.

2. If you were one of these two "ghosts," what advice might you have for today's young college students? Write a three-page recommendation from Pritchard's or Simplett's point of view that makes use of their own experience during and after college.
3. Write your own two- to three-page personal narrative about a high school friendship that taught you something important. After providing background information about your friend and the relationship, relate one important thing you learned from that friend. In effect, this will be a factual argument based upon personal experience. Your challenge will be to make the narrative engaging, but also credible and realistic.

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## A NATIONAL MINIMUM VACATION

ROBERT B. REICH

*Another article found on the Internet. "A National Minimum Vacation," by former Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich, is an election-year recommendation. Reich now serves as the Maurice B. Hexter Professor of Social and Economic Policy at Brandeis University. The article appeared in the online edition of The American Prospect, a magazine co-founded by Reich in 1990.*

It's summer. The weather's beautiful. You'd like to take a couple of weeks off work, right? But you already took a week last winter between Christmas and New Year's. And then there was that four days you took off for your friend's wedding last March. So you're not entitled to two weeks now. Maybe a week, at most.

Well, you're not alone. Many American workers get only two weeks paid vacation a year. Some companies give three weeks, but then they automatically subtract any sick days. A lot of companies don't give any vacation time at all, especially to people in their first year on payroll.

Here's my proposal: A federal law requiring that every company in America give every employee at least four weeks paid vacation per year.

You think this idea is far-fetched? It's the law in Europe. Even if you're an entry-level

worker in a fast-food restaurant in Sweden or Italy or anywhere in Europe—even if that fast-food restaurant happens to be called McDonald's or KFC—you get, by law, four weeks paid vacation.

I can already hear conservatives hollering: A federal requirement like this interferes in the free market!

Not so fast. We already have a minimum wage law. We've got a law requiring hourly workers get time-and-a-half for overtime. We've got worker-safety laws. So why not a minimum vacation law?

I can hear companies objecting: It will boost costs!

Yes, a bit. But the cost increase won't hurt you because the requirement will apply equally to all your competitors. So you just pass the cost along to consumers.

I can hear economists yelling: It will hurt American competitiveness! American

workers are already competing with workers all over the world who are willing to work longer and harder for less money.

10 Hold on. The competitiveness of American workers depends mostly on our productivity, and American workers are among the most productive in the world. So are European workers. And they get four-week vacations. A guarantee of four weeks paid vacation here may make American workers happier and hence even more productive.

11 Others will say: Your proposal will cost jobs!

But think about all the new jobs that will be created when more Americans have more vacation time—hotels, restaurants, recreation, and travel.

I'm not running for office, but I offer my proposal to anybody who is. Dean, Kerry, Lieberman, George W. Bush, anybody. Make it part of your platform: A minimum four weeks paid vacation for every working man and woman in America. You'll be elected in a flash.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reread the section in Chapter 4 on "Addressing the Counterargument." Identify how Reich makes use of this supporting tactic and evaluate his success.
2. Can you think of any counterarguments that Reich has overlooked?
3. Go to <http://www.prospect.org/authors/reich-r.html> to read a summary of Robert Reich's impressive career. Does the fact that this summary appears on the Web site of the magazine he cofounded weaken your confidence in Reich's credentials? Where would you go to double-check this information?
4. Paragraph 10 contains a causal chain with the final effect being greater productivity from American workers. What are the other links in this chain? How well does Reich support this causal argument?
5. Characterize the tone of the writing here. Do you think it is possible that Reich is being more playful than serious in making and supporting his claim? What evidence do you have for your answer?

### SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING (16.6)

1. Using Reich's argument as a model, write a two-page recommendation for adoption of one of the following policies: (a) mandatory parenting classes for young couples planning children; (b) mandatory surcharge on gas for speeding violators; (c) mandatory time management classes for college freshmen.
2. On the "About Us" page of *The American Prospect*, the following paragraph summarizes the magazine's mission: "*We founded the Prospect out of a conviction that the conservative undertow in American political life is profoundly influenced by the dominance of conservative media and think tanks. Our conservative counterparts have played a critical role in pulling the entire national debate to the right. We intend to take it back.*" (<http://www.prospect.org/>) Clearly, this magazine (and Reich) are politically liberal. Write a four-page extended definition of the terms "politically liberal" and "politically conservative," using examples of each.
3. Create a detailed outline for what one of the counterarguments cited in this article might look like.