

# The Committee of Forty-Eight

For a Conference of Americans  
who are equally opposed to  
Reaction and Violent  
Revolution

**Its Purposes—  
and the reasons for it**

ISSUED BY

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## The Aims of the Committee

The Committee of Forty-Eight has been formed for the purpose of

1st—Organizing a conference of Americans interested in a thoroughgoing program of fundamental reconstruction.

2nd—Presenting to such a conference a tentative platform dealing with political, social, industrial and international reconstruction.

3rd—Discussing at the Conference the possibility of

*a*—Forming a political party.

*b*—Forming a coalition with other political parties.

*c*—Creating an organization to translate liberal conviction into political action.

*d*—Accepting such other analogous suggestions as are presented by delegates to the conference.

# The Reasons for the Committee

The Committee of Forty-Eight has issued the following call:

## Revolution or Reconstruction?

### *A Call to Americans*

America has reached a turning point in her history. The time has come for all free minds to meet in concerted effort to face and shape the crisis.

Despite America's splendid success in a war waged against foreign autocracy, our country is menaced by the growing power of an autocratic and reactionary minority at home. We stand in danger of losing many of the liberties and advances won in the course of our national development. There is grave likelihood of our being left stagnant and backward in a world that for the most part is vigorously reorganizing its economic and political life.

Centralization and autocracy are increasing rapidly in the organization of government, in the control of credit, and in the determination of public opinion. The very classes whose labors in factory and field are the basis and substance of our economic power, find no effective political medium through which to express their economic demand, but by deceptive diversions of our party-system are denied their proper representation in the law-making bodies of the nation.

Criticism, competent or not, is discouraged; periodicals are suppressed with hardly a pretense of adequate hearing; public assemblies meeting under constitutional guarantees are dispersed by official force or by mob violence bred of official intolerance; our women are subjected to unwarranted delays in their campaign for the fulfilment of democracy; agricultural and labor organizers and political heretics are not only suppressed but are in many cases sent to penitentiaries for terms whose unprecedented severity would surprise even the fallen despots of Europe.

Meanwhile the cost of armaments, the orgies of profiteering, the extravagances of administration, the expense of innumerable agencies of suppression combined with lack of any intelligent and far-sighted budget system, swell the public debt, devouring loans and revenues before they can be collected, and sending prices always beyond the reach of fifteen million families whose physical and intellectual well being are the final test of our collective development and survival.

It is the privilege of America, protected by its vestige of geographical seclusion, to profit by the experiences of Europe. Europe too has had its reactionary ruling minorities, its industrial autocrats, its financial oligarchies, its massive armaments, its hated conscription, its corrupt and futile politics, its suppression of dissent, its judicial frightfulness, its bursting budgets, its toilers broken of body and bitter of soul. And Europe has revolution.

Is this what Americans want? We do not think so.

We believe that there is intelligence enough in this country, if it will but come together, to catch control of the current of things and co-operate directly with the inevitable forces of human growth. To Reaction and Revolution we oppose Reconstruction; not as a catchword and pretense, but as an organized effort to find some new adjustment of the changing powers that constitute society.

Many of us believe that these readjustments demand a new political alignment, that the old parties are determined to withhold that which the American people are determined to have. Day by day men come to see more clearly that these organizations have lost that spirit to serve the people which was embodied once in Jefferson and another time in Lincoln; that the shell has hardened and stifled the growth within. With exceptions lost among the instances, the politicians whom we have elected have misrepresented our desires and laughed at our hopes; they have opposed with a cynical accord all that we have set our hearts on as vital to the renovation of American life. There are times when by the vigor of a personality, the old mechanisms are driven to some efficacy and result; but the mechanism soon overcomes the man, pushes him aside, and undoes his little work. America cannot grow much more in these old skins.

Rather must reconstruction derive its impetus and direction from the political organization of the manual and mental workers of the country. The future belongs not to the inheritors and manipulators of great wealth but to the men and women who live by their work of hand or brain and know by hard experience the needs and aspirations of the common life.

**It is the purpose of the Committee of Forty-Eight to summon from all parts of the country the leaders of its liberal thought and of its forward-looking citizens to meet in conference. We hope that out of this assemblage of the hitherto scattered forces of Americanism will come a flexible statement of principles and methods that will permit effective co-operation with organized Labor and Agricultural workers in the tasks of social reconstruction.**

So we send out this call. It is not such an opportunity as comes with every day. The world is fluent now, and responds readily to every moulding force; but let it find a form and it will congeal again into resistance and immobility. All minds are awake today as seldom before, all hearts are astir with hopes and open to large purposes; but these minds will shrivel once more into their grooves, these hopes will lose their glow, if we miss this chance to organize the liberal intelligence of America into coherent voice and form. It may be the final opportunity of our generation.

**We need your Time, Enthusiasm, Advice  
and Money.**

# Among the Signers of this Call are

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