

'Radio Free America'

McIntire's Ship Is Broadcast-Ready

Cape May, N.J.

Just beyond the three-mile international limit, an old World War II mine sweeper sits serenely in the late afternoon sun — a most unlikely looking pirate ship flying a white church flag where any self-respecting pirate ship ought to have its skull and crossbones.

It is anchored fore and aft, and it rides quietly, a solitary crew member fishing off the bow.

In the ward room on the main deck a microphone sits unused on a table, and radio silence is maintained on the ship-to-shore frequency. But most of the kinks in a transmitter below decks are said to be resolved, and all is in near-readiness for the planned attack — probably by this weekend.

FIGHT

On port and starboard sides large red cloth signs convey the ship's mission. They say "Radio Free America" — the battle cry of the first pirate radio ship in American annals, one man's fight against regulation by the federal bureaucracy.

Back on the mainland, the man who masterminded acquisition and stationing of the unlicensed broadcast ship, fundamentalist preacher Carl McIntire, oversees the operation from the majestic old Admiral Hotel on the Atlantic shoreland.

He is a landlocked skipper

acing a landlocked deck, stalking what he regards as the Moby Dick of free speech — the Federal Communication Commission's fairness doctrine, an alleged violation of which cost him ownership of station WXUR in Media, Pa., last year.

By stationing a transmitter outside the three-mile limit, he says, he will be free of government control, and the 67-year-old pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, N.J., threatens, "I will go to jail" to make his case.

AGENTS

The FCC has had agents here for at least a week, listening for the first squeaks from the ship's transmitter. When it is heard, an FCC spokesman has said, the federal courts will be asked to order the ship — called the Columbus — to desist.

In his war on the FCC's fairness doctrine — which requires that persons criticized be given opportunity to reply, and that personal attacks be reasonable — the Columbus will be a continuing on-station battlewagon. It will be fueled at sea, never coming to port and crewed by shifts shuttled in and out by small boats.

Six regular crew members and two radio technicians are aboard now, awaiting word from McIntire to hoist an American flag and turn on the 10,000 watt transmitter.

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