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'Free' radio rally

BY A STAFF REPORTER

In defence of "free" radio—the off-shore pirate radio stations—hundreds of young people rallied in Trafalgar Square yesterday afternoon and then marched on Fleet Street with a bundle of "letters to the editor".

By thus storming the bastions of free speech and private enterprise they hoped to enlist the support of the national press in their campaign to save the pirate stations from being legislated out of existence. Speaker after speaker at the rally made the claim that what was at stake was free speech itself—a cause with which the press ought to identify itself.

What is also at stake—possibly the greater issue to the audience, if not to the platform party—was demonstrated by one speaker who turned his public address system microphone on his transistor radio to relay samples of the current output of the pirates. "Three cheers for Radio Caroline in Trafalgar Square," said a voice from the North Sea, followed by a blast of pop music.

The rally, sponsored by the 14-week-old Free Radio Association, pledged itself to fight "until we win" against the Government's anti-pirate radio Bill.

In a succession of militant speeches, "free" radio supporters testified to the quality, enjoyment, and breadth of entertainment available from the off-shore stations, to the inadequacy of the B.B.C. as a substitute "pop" station, and to the "police state" mentality of the Government in favouring the one while outlawing the other.