

SEPTEMBER 14, 1973

Unveiling A Seashore Scandal

State Senator William Staton of Sanford is so very right when he says the state is to blame for the fact that the Cape Lookout National Seashore remains a dream rather than a reality on North Carolina's Outer Banks islands.

Staton, defending his own dual role as lawyer for one of the major landowners on the banks and also as chairman of the major environmental committee of the State Senate, charged that his clients have remained ready to sell to the state for many years, even as appraised prices of coastal land have doubled, redoubled, and redoubled again. Now the same client is holding out for \$1.8 million for a 725-acre tract on Core Banks. The tract could have been had for less than one fifth of that in 1965 when Congress authorized establishing the 57-mile Seashore and the General Assembly promised that North Carolina would buy up and deliver the deserted islands of Core Banks.

The state, mainly in the person

of State Property Officer Carroll Mann, has dragged its feet, thrown away opportunities, and neglected the clear mandate of the Congress and the Assembly. In any other context, the whole story would be one of suspected collusion and almost criminal conspiracy to keep the people from benefiting from one of the great natural resource decisions of the past decade, the decision to preserve the great sweep of lonely Atlantic beach and sound-side marshland for the people.

Senator Staton could do a great public service, and in the process prove his own claims to personal integrity, by using his official position to expose the extent of the state's failures and to candidly point to the culprits. His committee could be the setting for hearings into the Cape Lookout Seashore story which could be of major service to citizens who have a right to expect better from their government in its attention to so vital a field of public policy.

