HELP WANTED
WASHINGTON — One of the toughest jobs in the country today is to be a personnel officer for a company doing business with the government.

Everett Dollop, a friend who hires people for Ozone Aviation, was telling me his troubles the other night.

"I'm going crazy," he said. "The law says that when a federal contract is awarded to a company the employer is required to draw up an 'affirmative action plan' for hiring, which means he has to show he will hire minorities and women appropriate to the general skills."

"What's wrong with that?" I asked.

"Nothing except that the law also states that firms with government contracts have to submit reports to the government on how many veterans they've hired." "So?"

"So," said Dollop, "we eliminate male whites over 25 years of age to start with."

"Why over 25 years of age?"

"Because there is a federally supported program to promote the hiring of youths and we're pledged to support it."

"So when it comes to a job," I said, "you have your choice of women, minorities, veterans and youths."

"And handicapped people. The law requires employers with government contracts to make a good faith effort to hire appropriate numbers of handicapped people. At the same time, we can get a tax break if we hire people from the welfare rolls. So it's to our advantage to hire the last group."

"That makes sense."

"At the same time," Dollop said, "the company is a member of National Alliance of Businessmen which supports the hiring of ex-offenders who have been released from jail."

"You have quite a varied group to pick from," I said, "the hiring of the disadvantaged who are not on welfare rolls, for one reason or another. And last week my boss agreed to give jobs to members of the Spanish-speaking community."

"There hardly seems to be anybody left."

"Did I mention that I've also been ordered to find work for senior citizens?"

"No, you forgot," I said.

"So you see the problem. I have no difficulty when a white male non-veteran walks in my office. I just throw him out as that quota has been filled for several years. But what do I do when a woman, a black, a veteran and a person on welfare all apply for the same job?"

"I guess you give it to the one who is most qualified."

"But the handicapped person might be the most qualified, or the ex-offender, or the person from the Spanish-speaking community. In any case no matter who I give the job to, the other people are going to sue us for discrimination. Our legal fees are more than the job is worth."

"Why don't you advertise for a black woman who served in the armed forces, speaks Spanish, has some form of immaturity, would like to get off welfare and did some time in jail."

"They're not as easy to find as you would think. Besides no newspaper will allow you to put sex or color in a classified advertisement. We also are not permitted to mention age. All we can say is that there are job openings."

"It sounds like you have to play God every day," I told Dollop.

"Well, I was doing pretty good getting a favorable mix until I got this notice from the Fair Employment Practices Commission this afternoon." Dollop read it to me. "Could you please let us know how many American Indian weight-watchers you have on your payroll and when you expect your quota to be filled?"