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German Scholar Says Korean Parties Need Expert Help

By Kim Sue-young
Staff Reporter

South Korea's political parties should be more attentive to advice from outside experts to develop democracy under a party-based system, a German scholar said yesterday.

Project coordinator Karsten Grabow from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a German research institute, pointed out problems with Korea's political parties during a symposium in Seoul.

"As political parties choose their leaders only from among party members, they tend to form a cartel, excluding external figures," the 39-year-old scholar said. "So, their political decisions are likely to be aimed at staying in power."

Another problem of the party-based system is that party leaders tend to make the nation into their prey, which means ranking officials enjoy extra privileges such as high wages and pensions, Grabow said.

He said public apathy to politics is caused by those two problems.

The German scholar stressed that research institutions affiliated with political parties should not engage themselves in politics only for their affiliated party.

Their educational projects should be open to the public to help them to come to the right decision, he said.

During the symposium, Professor Sin Du-cheol said research institutions affiliated with politi-



Karsten Grabow

cal parties do not perform their role well.

"Those think tanks are supposed to study policies and col-

lect and publish data. But they invest little money in conducting research on policies," said Sin who teaches at the National Election Commission's Electoral Training Institute.

The think tanks have few achievements in developing policies, Sin said.

He said the governing Uri Party's institution has only averaged 1.8 research papers per person, while the main opposition Grand National Party (GNP)'s think tank has averaged 2.5.

In addition, their research is concentrated in certain fields and short-term projects, the professor said.

KAVKAS, an association of scholarship beneficiaries of the Konrad Foundation, hosted the symposium.

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