

Climate 'skeptic': I agree with Gore

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October 7, 2010 04:32 AM EDT

One of the world's most famous global warming contrarians says he sees eye to eye with Al Gore on climate science – for the most part – and claims his view have been distorted by those on both sides of the global warming debate.

Bjorn Lomborg, a Danish academic and the self-proclaimed "skeptical environmentalist," said he "fundamentally" agrees with the global warming crusader and former vice president.

"We agree that global warming is real, that it's man-made that it is an important problem," Lomborg told POLITICO in an interview Wednesday. But, "We disagree very much about how to tackle it."

Lomborg has appeared as the skeptical voice before congressional panels, and has long argued that Gore and other global warming "alarmists" have over-dramatized the threats of global warming to draw attention to the issue.

But Lomborg, who is in Washington touting his new film, "Cool It," disputes characterizations that he's ever been a climate change denier and says his views have been falsely portrayed by both skeptics and those who favor mandating drastic cuts in carbon dioxide emissions.

"I'm being misused by both sides," he said.

"I'm not skeptical about the natural science," he added. "I'm very skeptical about the political and economic solutions that are being offered."

Now that the climate measures advanced by Democrats have collapsed in the Senate, Lomborg said he sees more room opening up for that "pragmatic middle" in the United States.

"I think we need to get the Democrats off the high horse that there's only one solution, and we need to get the Republicans to step off their 'The right solution is to do nothing'" stance, he said.

Although climate change poses an environmental risk, Lomborg said, the carbon-cutting solutions advocated by international leaders are too expensive for the meager effects they would have on altering global temperatures.

Rather, he advocates other solutions he says will be more cost-effective, like capturing carbon from power plants, slashing methane and black soot, and planting more trees.

But some climate skeptics claim that Lomborg's recent statements mark an about-face from his previous positions.

"I believe he's a closet skeptic who doesn't have the courage to admit it," said Marc Morano, former communications director of the climate skeptic website "Climate Depot" and a former spokesman for the Senate's lead climate skeptic, James Inhofe (R-Okla.).

"He likes to essentially portray himself as the man in the middle when he's clearly attacked

both the United Nation's and Al Gore's extreme claims," Morano added.

Lomborg sparked a media frenzy last month when the London Guardian reported that he had "changed his tune" on global warming science by advocating that more money go to fight climate change. He responded with a Wall Street Journal op-ed asserting that he'd never changed his mind on the issue.

"That's the way it is with heresy – there is no middle ground," he wrote. "Either you believe global warming is the worst problem mankind has ever faced and that cutting carbon is the only solution, or you are an antiscientific ignoramus who probably thinks the Earth is flat."

Lomborg is infamous in many environmental circles, and was once compared to Adolf Hitler by Rajendra Pachauri, head of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for treating people too much like numbers.

He told POLITICO that the media coverage has been a "very good demonstration of what that dichotomy does to the smart middle, which is what I'm trying to defend – a place where you can say, 'Listen, global warming is real, it's not the end of the world, but it's not a hoax either. And so we need to tackle it smartly, but we shouldn't panic and do whatever to deal with it.'"

But when it comes to climate science, there is no middle ground, said Rick Piltz, director of the watchdog group Climate Science Watch. "It's not a faith-based thing, it's evidence based," Piltz said.

"I really think people should pay attention to the leading experts in any field – not slavishly – but you don't just throw it overboard," Piltz added.