News Summary

A new energy extraction measure has recently started to gain popularity. The new energy frontier coal gasification has ignited a debate all the way from Wales to Wyoming.

The coal gasification technique is similar to the hydraulic fracturing technology that resulted in a oil and gas boom across North America. The key ingredient in the process is not water but fire.

Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) is an old idea that was initiated by one of the Soviet leaders, Vladimir Lenin. The procedure allows transformation of abundant but difficult to mine coal reserves into clean fuel i.e. synthetic natural gas. Therefore instead of mining for coal, the companies would drill into the coal seam and then ignite it and then capture the “syngas” which is a combination of carbon dioxide, hydrogen and methane.

The syngas can be used just as natural gas in order to produce power, making it ideal for China and other countries. Critics however worry that this process might adversely affect the environment by ground water contamination, sinkholes as well as underground fires. They claim that the greenhouse gas emissions would also be significant unless precautionary measures are undertaken.

Source:

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/energy/2014/04/140408-new-energy-frontier-underground-coal-gasification/