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Staff Photo by John Daggett

Vice-president Dolores Huerta, wearing a sweater with the United Farm Workers' crest on it, addresses a rally yesterday.

## California grape protest

# *Dominion store picketed*

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Several hundred pickets chanting "boycottons le raisin," blocked the entrance to the St. Denis and Rachel Street Dominion store for more than an hour last night in support of the current United Farm Workers Union (UFW) boycott against California grapes and lettuce.

"What can I possibly say?" asked a spokesman for the store. "It should be packed with customers in here tonight, but the place is almost empty."

Led by Dolores Huerta, first vice-president of the UFW, who came to Montreal after founder Cesar Chavez entered a California hospital with back trouble, the pickets carried large placards and chanted.

A sign was posted by Dominion management over the grape section of the produce counter, suggesting that anyone who supported the UFW boycott had the alternative of not buying the grapes.

The pickets left the store about 8 p.m. and marched to St. Louis de France church at Roy and Berri Streets for a mass rally.

It ended the first day of a new drive to persuade Montrealers to honor the UFW boycott.

The previous Montreal boycott, in 1970, was instrumental in helping the California-based union gain certification as representative of 70,000 migrant farm workers in the U.S.

As a result of that victory, the union signed collective agreements with most growers, raising wages, establishing a grievance procedure, protecting workers from unsafe pesticides and providing medical plans and paid vacations.

Last year, however, "back-door deals" were signed between the growers and the Teamsters Brotherhood, the UFW says, and virtually all the gains made in the past were eliminated.

The UFW now is trying to re-establish itself as the sole representative of Mexican-American farm workers

who harvest such crops as grapes, lettuce and lemons.

UFW vice-president Huerta told a press conference here yesterday that the sale of grapes in Canada and the U.S. has dropped 13 per cent since the latest boycott started.

In Montreal, a drop as high as 38 per cent was recorded in September, and Huerta urged Montrealers to continue the protest.

Montreal, ranking fifth in North America in grape consumption, is considered a strategic link in the campaign.

Huerta predicted the Teamsters will launch an intense publicity campaign in the Montreal area shortly in an effort to discredit UFW founder Cesar Chavez and urge people to ignore the boycott.

Representatives of the Quebec Federation of Labor, the Quebec Teachers Corporation, the Canadian Labor Congress, and a host of local religious and student groups are supporting Huerta in her efforts in Montreal.