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her insistence that she and her sisters should be able to go about their work independently of the local bishops.

ity. It would be a pity if those gritty qualities were to be lost sight of in the excitement of this week's papal visit.

Other peoples' trams

IT MIGHT surprise many residents of Melbourne to learn that we are not alone among big-city dwellers in relying heavily on trams. We are so accustomed to hearing visitors to Melbourne remark on this quaint form of transport that we begin to think of ourselves as uniquely blessed — or cursed, depending on your point of view — in having these juggernauts rumbling along our streets and roads. Yet the latest issue of *Jane's Urban Transport Systems*, as reported in this newspaper yesterday, highlights how many other large cities have trams. Indeed, the tram networks in some cities are much more extensive than Melbourne's. St Petersburg and Dusseldorf, for example, each have almost three times as many kilometres of tram track as Melbourne.

That is the good news. The bad news in the *Jane's* compilation is that, with the exception of Dusseldorf, all the big

tram systems are to be found in central and eastern European nations where public transport networks have never been exposed to competition in the form of private car ownership. From an efficiency standpoint, therefore, the company in which Melbourne finds itself is hardly distinguished.

But this — and the fact that tram losses cost the Victorian taxpayers many millions each year — is no reason why we should not push on with extending and improving the existing system. Customers can be attracted to trams, and trains, if they are frequent, reliable, moderately priced, comfortable and go where people want them to go. This is an argument for extending Melbourne's tram network, not neglecting it. We are committed much too heavily to trams to even consider pulling out. So let's run them with determination and flair.

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